

THE INDIAN NATIONAL
MOVEMENT AN OUTLINE

N. S. BOSE

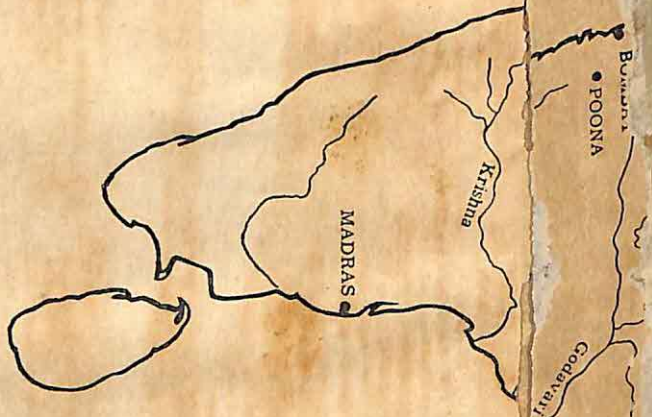
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THE
INDIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT
AN OUTLINE

By

NEMAI SADHAN BOSE, M.A. (CAL.), PH.D. (LOND.)

Lecturer in History,

Jadavpur University, Calcutta.



FIRMA K. L. MUKHOPADHYAY

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To

My Mentor

SRI NISITH RANJAN RAY

PREFACE

The Indian national movement has been a favourite subject with historians, Indian and foreign, both before and after 1947. Quite a number of important books have been written on the subject, the most notable among recent works being Dr. R. C. Majumdar's *History Of The Freedom Movement In India* in three volumes. But there is always room for more on such an inviting subject of wide and absorbing interest, particularly for a brief and balanced account of the movement for the students and general readers. The need of such a book in a brief compass has long been felt. In that respect this little monograph is possibly the first of its kind. I have attempted to give a simple but analytical account of the Indian national movement. This, I hope, will help the readers to be familiar with the outline of the movement and will arouse their interest in the more exhaustive and learned works on the subject.

I am indebted to Dr. P. C. Gupta, Head of the Department of History, Jadavpur University, for encouraging me to undertake the work and for his valuable suggestions. I am also thankful to Sri Bimalaprosad Mukherjee, Reader in History, Jadavpur University, and Sri Ratanlal Chatterjee for helping me in many ways.

RAMKRISHNAPUR,
HOWRAH,
March, 1965.

NEMAI SADHAN BOSE.

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CHAPTER I.

THE GROWTH OF POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

The dearth of a unifying sense of nationalism and patriotic feelings was one of the cogent contributing factors to the foundation and consolidation of the British rule in India. It may justly be said that before the nineteenth century the people in general were mostly callous and indifferent to political changes. There was no sense of unity, no conception of India as a nation or of Indians as a race. There was neither any public opinion nor any forum to express and ventilate grievances. Even in the beginning of the nineteenth century signs of political consciousness in the country were hardly evident. No organised attempt was made to resist the Government's repressive measures, tyranny and merciless exploitation. Of course there was resistance against the British and there was reaction against the British rule. Signs of discontent and disaffection were discernible. But the struggles of various rulers and chieftains against the British rule did not have a nationalist character. These lacked genuine patriotic feelings and they did not have the broader object of the deliverance of the whole country from the foreign yoke. More laudable and heroic were the struggles of the weavers and *malangis*, the peasants' revolt against Debi Singha, Agent of the Zamindar of Dinajpore, the peasants' revolt in Bankura, the Choar revolt (1799) in Midnapore, the Sannyasi revolt (c. 1760—c. 1800) in

northern Bengal and later the Kol rebellion in Chota Nagpur. These revolts, obviously lacking in patriotic fervour and outlook, were caused by economic factors and were more spontaneous in character. Though void of any national colouring these revolts revealed a discontent against the exploitation and unbearable tyranny of the Company's Government and its officers.

Factors
contributing
to the
growth
of Indian
nationalism
in the
19th Century

The growth of political consciousness, leading to the birth of the Indian national movement for independence was one of the salient features of the nineteenth century Indian awakening. Significantly the alien rule itself was basically responsible for the growth of Indian nationalism, as it is only natural for a subjugated country to aspire after and fight for freedom. Broadly speaking, nationalism in India was the product of Western impact. It was Western knowledge and education that provided the intellectual background to Indian nationalism. Study of European history and literature made the educated Indians familiar with the prevailing spirit of democracy, nationalism and liberalism of Europe. Towards the end of the eighteenth century the ideas of Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau, Hume and others began to reach the Indian shores. These made a profound influence on the inquisitive and responsive Bengali middle-class mind. It was Bengal where the British rule was first established and English education was first introduced. So it was only natural that Bengal was the vanguard in the growth of political consciousness and agitations in India in the nineteenth century. The growth of political consciousness and the beginning of the national movement in the nineteenth century may be attributed to a number of other factors.

Western
impact

The spread of English education and the foundation of the Universities had great influence on the young generation of Indians. The Universities were producing every year capable, brilliant, educated youngmen with ambition and aspirations. But suitable employments were not yet available in plenty. The principle of "Indianisation" of service was accepted as early as in 1833. A clause of the Act of 1833 provided that "No Native of the said Territories, nor any natural-born subject of His Majesty resident therein, shall by reason only of his religion, place of birth, descent, colour or any of them, be disabled from holding any place, office, or employment under the said Company." The same principle was reaffirmed in the Proclamation of 1858, where it was stated that "so far as may be, our subjects of whatever race or creed be freely and impartially admitted to offices in our service, the duties of which they may be qualified by their education, ability and integrity duly to discharge." But these declarations practically remained dead letters. Educated Indians found the doors to higher offices barred. The British Government was reluctant to associate Indians with the administration at its highest level. Even in the lesser services the experience of the Indians was mostly unhappy. They suffered from a sense of humiliation and frustration which soon transformed into one of opposition to the foreign rule. One such notable example was the life of Surendranath Banerjee. The sense of racial superiority, the arrogance and highhandedness of most of the Englishmen in India wounded the feelings of the Indians. This was one of the factors in the Indian unrest.

Frustration
of educated
Indians

Contem-
porary inter-
national
events

The current of nationalist ideas in Europe and the international political events also contributed to the making of Indian nationalism. The American War of Independence, the great French Revolution and the Revolutions of 1832 and 1848, the Greek War of Independence, the struggle of the Italians for independence and unification stirred the imagination of the Indians.

Modernisa-
tion of
transport
and commu-
nications

The establishment of a highly centralised administration had also its cementing effect. The improvement in communications, increasing travelling facilities, the adoption of English as the medium of communications by the intelligentsia, increasing social contacts between the people of the different provinces gave a "new meaning" to the words "India" and "Indians". On the growth of Indian nationalism Lala Lajpat Rai wrote that "the methods of the English Government in India, their educational system, their press, their laws, their courts, their railways, their telegraphs, their post offices, their steamers, had as much to do with it as the native love of country."

The Press

The rapid growth of the press, particularly the vernacular press, accelerated the growth of peoples' consciousness. From the early nineteenth century the number of newspapers and journals in India began to increase rapidly. By the end of the century there were more than five hundred newspapers in India. Some of the notable among these were *Sambad Prabhakar*, *Hindu Patriot*, *Indian Mirror*, *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, *Bengalee*, *Somprokash*, *Sulabh Samachar*, *Reis and Rayat* in Bengali, *Voice of India*, *Native Opinion*, *Bombay Samachar*, *Indu Prakash*, *Jam-e-Jamshed*, *Mahratta*, *Kesari* in Bombay, *Hindu*,

Swadeshmitram in Madras and later the *Herald* in Bihar, the *Advocate* in Lucknow and the *Tribune* in Lahore.

The growing spirit of patriotism found expression in contemporary Indian literature which in turn immensely helped the cause of Indian nationalism. Significant contribution, to mention only a few, was made by Bankimchandra Chatterjee the composer of *Bandemataaram*, Michael Madhusudan Datta, Dinabandhu Mitra, Rangalal Banerjee, Hemchandra Banerjee, Nabin Chandra Sen and Rabindranath Tagore in Bengali, Bharatendu Harischandra in Hindi, Subramania Bharati in Tamil and G. H. Desmukh, Visnusastri Ciplonkar and Sivaram Mahadev Paranjpe in Marathi literature. The effects of English literature and Western philosophy on the educated Indians were not insignificant. As a vernacular paper remarked, "It is their Wilberforces, Hampdens, Mills, Brights, Metcalfes, Macaulays, and hundreds of other great men, whose liberal principles have captivated us, and we have regarded them as the very model of morality, and hold them in veneration."

The economic condition of the country had been in the meantime deteriorating. Increasing poverty became alarming. Famines occurred almost regularly and the Government did little to mitigate the peoples' sufferings. The steady "drain" of wealth had impoverished India. Many Indians, as Coupland observes, "came to believe that it would have been better that India's natural resources should have been lain untouched and undeveloped until Indians had acquired the capacity to exploit them entirely by themselves." This feeling led to a reaction against

Deteriorating
economic
condition

the British rule even among those who had been its admirer for a long time.

Beginning of
Indology

The growth of Indian nationalism owed much to the beginning of researches in ancient Indian history and civilization. The beginning was made with the foundation of the Asiatic Society in 1784. The works of Sir William Jones, Prinsep, Cunningham, Max Muller, Wilson, Rajendralal Mitra and others unearthed and threw a flood of light on India's great heritage and ancient glory. These instilled into them a buoyant sense of pride and self-confidence. As Dr. Spear writes, "All this attention was to the new class as water in a thirsty land, avid as it was for respect. When it came from the new world of the West, the source at the same time of so much criticism and scorn, it was balm indeed." Added to these inspiring revelations were the spirit of revivalism spread by the Arya Samaj founded by Dayananda Saraswati and the Theosophic movement. The remarkable transformation in the life and thought of the people, the new era of social, religious and educational reforms ushered in by great men of the age naturally accelerated the growth of Indian nationhood.

All-round
awakening

The Beginning of Organised Political Agitations :

Raja
Rammohun
Roy

The origin of national consciousness in India is traced to Raja Rammohun Roy. He is regarded as the "Aristotle" of modern Indian political thought. Raja Rammohun Roy was the first to start political movements on constitutional lines in India. He was influenced by the political thought of Western thinkers. In his paper *Sambad Kaumudi* public grievances found expression for the first time. A man of practical

wisdom and foresight he did not raise the question of political rights for all. He frankly said, "The peasantry and the villagers in the interior are quite ignorant, and indifferent about either the former or present Government. But men of aspiring character and members of such ancient families as are very much reduced by the present system, consider it derogatory to accept the trifling public situations which natives are allowed to hold under the British Government, and are decidedly disaffected to it." Though he looked upon the British rule as necessary and beneficial for some time to come, he had the vision of a free India in the distant future.

In 1823 the acting Governor-General Adam issued a Press Ordinance taking away the liberty of the Press. Rammohun started an agitation against this repressive Ordinance. This is regarded as the first constitutional agitation in India. He with a few of his associates submitted a Memorial to the Supreme Court against the Ordinance and sent a petition to the King-in-Council. The Memorial was a remarkable document full of forceful arguments in favour of a free-press. His efforts did not prove successful immediately. As a protest against the Press Ordinance he discontinued the publication of his weekly Persian paper the *Mirat-ul-Akhbar*. The free-press agitation was the first instance of an organised effort to rally the intelligentsia against an encroachment on the fundamental rights of the people.

In 1827 a Jury Act was passed which introduced religious discrimination in the law courts. The Act declared that henceforward any Hindu or Moham-
medan could be tried by either Europeans or native

Agitation
against
the Press
Ordinance
of 1823

Agitation
against
the Jury
Act (1827)

Christians, but no Christian, either European or native was to be tried either by a Hindu or a Muslim juror. Rammohun opposed this Act. Through one of his English friends—Mr. J. Crawford, he submitted petitions against the Act signed by Hindus and Muslims to both the Houses of the Parliament. In 1830 he protested against Government measures to tax rent-free lands.

Demand
for more
rights for
the Indians

Another important effort of Raja Rammohun was to secure more rights for the Indians at the time of the renewal of the Company's Charter in 1833. One of the main objects of his visit to England was to argue against the monopoly rights and other privileges enjoyed by the East India Company in India, and to place before the Parliament a list of other demands. His demands included appointment of native assessors in the Civil Courts ; employment of Indians in the Civil Service and the consultation of Indian public opinion before enacting any legislation. The last demand was an indirect reference to the need of an elected Indian legislature. Though most of the demands remained unfulfilled yet he laid the foundation stone of future constitutional agitations in India. Besides these, he strongly refuted the prevailing misconception of persons "degraded by Asiatic effeminacy." In every sphere—religious reforms, social reforms, education, journalism etc. Rammohun was a pioneer. He was the first Indian to have wide international sympathies and contacts. He was deeply interested in contemporary international events. He had a great respect for the ideals of the French Revolution and had unbounded sympathy for the struggles of the Greeks and the Irish people. The failure of the revolution in Naples in 1821 distressed him and the success

Rammohun's
inter-
national
sympathies

of the Spanish American Revolution in 1823 elated him. He supported the Reform Bill agitation in England and took keen interest in its progress. He was personally known to many European celebrities of that age. The inaugurator of a new age in India he has also been called "the father of political regeneration in India."

Political agitations started by Rammohun were continued by a group of radical youngmen in Bengal educated in the Hindu College. It was Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1809-1831), the remarkable teacher of the Hindu College, who infused in them the spirit of patriotism. These young radicals, famous as Derozians or the Young Bengal, were well known for their patriotism and advanced political thinking. Prominent among them were Tarachand Chakravarty, Dakshinaranjan Mukherjee, Rasik Krishna Mallik, Ramgopal Ghose and Pearychand Mitra. Derozio himself was deeply impressed by the French Revolutionary ideas and the political philosophy of Tom Paine, Hume, Gibbon, Bacon and others. Derozio was in favour of liberty in every sphere of life. His students imbibed all the ideas of their teacher. The most important contribution of the Derozians was the successful continuation of the agitation for a free-press started by Rammohun. The movement proved fruitful when in 1835 Sir Charles Metcalfe removed the restrictions on the press. They also continued the agitation for Indianisation of high government posts. They were excited and elated by the July Revolution of 1830. Some of them even secretly hoped for the out-break of a similar revolution in India. Between 1830 and 1843 the Young Bengal, through

Political
conscious-
ness of
Young
Bengal

their journals and associations, did much for the growth of political consciousness among the people. In later life many of them played a significant part in the Indian national movement.

Political
agitations
continued

The associates of Rammohun also continued the tradition of political agitation. One notable feature of the growing political consciousness was that the middle-class intelligentsia had great admiration for and faith in the British rule. Their loyalty, along with increasing consciousness of their own rights and privileges, remained firm. But a sense of disillusionment and frustration was increasingly noticeable. This was very much so on the question of Indian participation in the administration.

The spirit of organised political opposition began to find expression. Public meetings were organised on the issue of the removal of restrictions on the press. Regular agitation for administrative reforms was started in the press and on the platform. In 1837 the Zamindary Association—later renamed as the Landholders' Society was formed in Bengal. Though this Society was founded to promote the welfare of the landholders yet it did not altogether overlook the interest of the ryots. The Society intended to set up branches throughout India with the object of establishing contact with people outside Bengal having common interest and objectives. The Landholders' Society was one of the earliest of associations in India which sought to work constitutionally for legitimate rights and wished to express public opinions.

Land-
holders'
Society
(1837)

British India
Society
in England
(1839)

The Landholders' Society worked in co-operation with the British India Society in England. The last-named Society was founded by William Adam, a friend

and associate of Rammohun, in 1839. Its object was to create English public interest in Indian affairs and to work for "the improvement of the condition of the native population." Adam also edited a journal named the *British India Advocate*.

In 1842 Dwarakanath Tagore went to England and returned to India in 1843 with George Thompson. The latter was well-known as an orator and as a protagonist of the anti-slavery campaign and of free-trade in England. Thompson was brought to educate Bengali youths in methods of constitutional agitation. Thompson succeeded in creating great enthusiasm among the youngmen. On his suggestion was founded a new political association—the Bengal British India Society (20 April, 1843). The object of this Society was, "the collection and dissemination of information, relating to the actual condition of the people of British India, and the laws and institutions, and resources of the country, and to employ such other means of a peaceable and lawful character, as may appear calculated to secure the welfare, extend the just rights, and advance the interests of all classes of our fellow subjects." The membership of the Society was open to all. But most of the members belonged to the upper classes of Indians and sympathetic Englishmen. The Society, however, met with little success and had not much appeal as a political organisation.

In the forties of the nineteenth century political thought in Bengal made remarkable progress owing to the rationalistic and powerful writings of Akshoy Kumar Datta and the all-round progressive and advanced outlook and tendencies promoted by the *Tattvabodhini Patrika*.

The Landholders' Society and the Bengal British India Society failed to give the necessary lead in political issues. The pace of political advancement seemed to have slowed down considerably. But the "Black Acts" controversy suddenly made the situation lively. In 1849, Mr. Bethune, Law Member of the Government, introduced four Bills with the object of bringing British-born subjects under the jurisdiction of the local courts, thus abolishing the existing privilege of trial by the Calcutta Supreme Court alone. The proposed Acts alarmed the British-born subjects and they started agitation against the "Black Acts" --as they called these just proposals. The politically-minded Indians strongly supported the Bills. Ramgopal Ghose earned the name 'Indian Demosthenes' for his fiery oratory in favour of the Bills. But the Bills had to be withdrawn because of the determined opposition of the English community. This was a bitter disappointment for the Indians. The controversy exposed the limitations of the existing political organisations of the Indians. The need of a stronger and broader political body was felt. These developments led to the merger of the two existing Societies and the foundation of the British Indian Association on 31 October, 1851.

Black Acts
Controversy
(1849)

British
Indian
Association
(1851)

The membership of the British Indian Association was open only to Indians. Its object was to seek for improvements in the local administration and in the system of government laid down by the Parliament. The Association had an all-India outlook. In its first annual Report the Association noted with satisfaction "the formation at Poona, Madras and Bombay successively, of Associations of a similar

character." The second annual Report stated that the Association "have kept up friendly correspondence with the Associations of the sister Presidencies, at intervals, as opportunities occurred." In 1852 the British Indian Association submitted a petition to the Government enumerating existing grievances and making a number of demands. Giving vent to the growing sense of disappointment, the petition said that Indians "cannot but feel that they have not profited by their connection with Great Britain to the extent which they had a right to look for." The demands of the Association included the allowing of a sufficient interval between the publication of draft Bills and their enactment. This, they argued, was necessary for eliciting public opinion. The petition prayed for reduction of postage for newspapers, relaxation of the pressure of the revenue system, improvement of judicial administration, protection of the life and property of the people from molestation, encouragement to indigenous manufacturers, education of the people and admission of Indians to higher administrative posts. One of the most important demands of the Association was that the Legislature of India should have a popular character and some Indian members should be included in the Legislature. The Association laid great emphasis on this demand and asserted that "every legitimate means should be adopted to ensure the removal of this great defect from the new enactment, as well as to secure the advantage of having the business of legislation conducted with open doors."

The Company's Charter was to be renewed in 1853. The occasion for the presentation of the peti-

tion was the impending renewal of the Charter. It was realised that legitimate grievances and demands of the people should be voiced and presented by people of various parts of British India. With this end in view a Madras Presidency branch of the Association was founded. This Association in Madras also sought to improve the efficiency of the administration and "ameliorate the condition of the native inhabitants of the subject country." An Association was also founded in Oudh.

Associations
in Madras,
Oudh and
Bombay

In the Bombay Presidency the Kalyan Unanayak Mandal of Poona had been working for constitutional reforms. It had drawn up a charter of rights for presentation to the British Parliament. Gopal Hari Deshmukh, more well known as *Lokahitavadi*, was the most notable leader of the Mandal. He did much to propagate nationalistic ideas. In August, 1852, was founded the Bombay Association. The initiative was taken by Jagnnath Shankar Sheth. The Bombay Association submitted a petition to the British Parliament praying for an "enlightened system of government."

The efforts of the British Indian Association and other Associations did not meet with any immediate success. In the subsequent years the British Indian Association suggested the holding of the Civil Service Examination in India. It also supported another attempt to bring British-born subjects under the jurisdiction of the ordinary courts. This time also the move failed. The controversy on this issue continued. In 1861 the privileges of the British-born subjects were abolished, though they still could not be tried by Indian officers. This disparity continued to

cause much hatred and bitterness. The British Indian Association and its sister organisations in other parts of India proceeded on the lines of constitutional agitation. Though their efforts failed in achieving anything remarkable yet they contributed to a growing sense of political consciousness and interest in national affairs.

When the Indian intelligentsia were trailing the placid path of constitutional agitations, there took place the historic Mutiny of 1857. The nature of the great rising has been a subject of lively controversy. According to a number of historians the Mutiny of 1857 was really India's "First National War of Independence." It was the country's "desperate bid for freedom.....the first expression, indeed, however crude in many respects, of India's urge for independence." It was a "planned and organised political and military rising aimed at destroying the British power in India." But there are others who differ from this view. They argue that the Mutiny was not an organised conspiracy against the British. It was the work of the Sepoys themselves. Only in some areas it assumed the character of a general revolt. There was indeed widespread discontent among the people of all classes. But only a few among them might have been inspired by nobler motives of patriotism. Others only saw in it an opportunity to satisfy their own interest by the sudden removal of governing authority. It was essentially a mutiny of the Sepoys, assuming the character of peoples' revolt in certain areas only. The politically conscious educated classes condemned the Mutiny and the violence of the mutineers. The British Indian Association and the National Mohammedan Association of

1857: A
Mutiny or
War of
Independence?

Calcutta passed resolutions denouncing the Mutiny and expressing the hope that it would have "no sympathy, countenance or support from the bulk of the Civil population." The native population, by and large, stood by the side of the Government. Even though it was a large-scale struggle against the British, it cannot be regarded as a "War of Independence" because "the idea of a common national endeavour to free the country from the yoke of the foreigners" was absent.

Besides the two above-mentioned completely opposite schools of opinion there is a third view on the Mutiny of 1857. According to this, the movement of 1857 had its origin in Sepoy discontent and derived its strength from the widespread disaffection among the civil population. It started as a Sepoy Mutiny but was not confined to the army everywhere. The rebels came from all sections of the people and enjoyed popular support in varying degrees in the main areas of the revolt. But the educated classes were undoubtedly on the side of the Government and condemned the violent out-break. The movement achieved greatest success in the North-Western Provinces, Oudh and Rohilkhand. Outside Oudh and Shahabad it lacked general sympathy and cannot be said to have earned the status of a national war. Even in the case of Oudh, where it assumed a "national dimension", the term must be used with reservation as "the conception of Indian nationality was yet in embryo." If the mutineers could succeed the "leaders would have set the clock back, they would have done away with the new reforms, with the new order..... In short, they wanted a counter-revolution." But the

Mutiny was inevitable. "No dependent nation can for ever reconcile itself to foreign domination." The condemnation of the educated Indians is understandable. They still had firm faith in British liberalism. Political agitations were continued on constitutional lines and any programme or thought of a violent attempt to overthrow British rule was beyond their comprehension. This view, very forcefully presented by Dr. Surendranath Sen, is generally regarded to be more balanced.

The far-reaching effects of the Mutiny on the growth of Indian nationalism were significant. Its memory inspired the Indian revolutionaries between the two World Wars. After the Mutiny the Government of India was brought under the Crown. It opened the eyes of the British authorities and brought home to them the necessity of a change in policy and attitude. The Queen's Proclamation (1 November, 1858) promised to respect the rights, dignity and honour of the Indian princes. It pledged to pursue a policy of justice, benevolence and religious toleration. There would be no discrimination in matters of employment. The Proclamation was followed by the Indian Councils Act of 1861 which marked a constitutional advance. For the first time Indians were to be nominated to the newly-created Legislative Councils. Most of these remained mere pious declarations. But nevertheless the Mutiny was a landmark in the growth of Indian nationalism. It ushered in a period of constitutional advancement. Moreover, as Harish Chandra Mukherjee wrote : "The time has nearly come when all Indian questions must be solved by Indians. The mutinies have made patent to the

English public what must be the effects of politics in which the Native is allowed no voice."

The Indigo
Agitation

Almost in the wake of the rising of 1857 took place the Indigo agitation which immensely helped the growth of nationalism in Bengal. The politically conscious Bengali intelligentsia which had showed little sympathy for the Mutiny stood by the side of the poor Indigo cultivators in their heroic struggle against the unbearable tyranny and exploitation of the Indigo planters. It provided an inspiring example of co-operation between the poor peasants and the educated class. Foremost among the Bengali intellectuals, who supported the Indigo agitation, were Harish Chandra Mukherjee, Sisir Kumar Ghose, Monomohan Ghose and Dinabandhu Mitra. Another great friend of the Indigo cultivators was Rev. Long. The editorials, articles and reports of the *Hindu Patriot* of Harish Chandra Mukherjee and Dinabandhu Mitra's famous drama *Neel Darpan* which depicted the miserable life of the cultivators and the inhuman tyranny of the planters, moved the entire Bengali middle class. The movement succeeded in mitigating the worst evils of Indigo cultivation. On its significance Sisir Kumar Ghose wrote : "It was the indigo disturbance which first taught the natives the value of combination and political agitation." This was certainly so as far as the middle-class and peasantry co-operation was concerned.

CHAPTER II

NASCENT NATIONALISM

In the post-Mutiny period political consciousness and the assertion of national sentiment developed wider and more emotional characteristics. The pioneer of nationalism in Bengal during these years was Rajnarayan Bose. Himself a conservative Brahmo, Rajnarayan extolled the glory and virtue of Indian history, culture and heritage. The current of Western culture and civilization was at that time practically sweeping most of the educated Bengalis off their feet. Rajnarayan and others devoted themselves to the cause of Hindu cultural heritage and turning the tide of Westernization. In 1866 was founded the Society for the Promotion of National Feeling (*Jatio Gaurab Sampadani Sabha*) at Midnapore in Bengal. A prospectus for a Society for the Promotion of National Feeling among the Educated Natives of Bengal was issued by Rajnarayan Bose in the same year. The object of the Society was to revive the national gymnastic exercises, establish a Model School of Instruction in Hindi Music, set up a School of Hindu Medicine, publish in Bengali the results of the researches of the Sanskrit scholars of Europe on Indology etc.

Inspired by this prospectus of Rajnarayan the *Hindu Mela* was established in 1867. The initiative was taken by Nabagopal Mitra who, for his zealous preaching of nationalistic ideas, became known as 'National Nabagopal'. The main object of the Hindu Hindu Mela (1867)

Mela was to foster the spirit of self-help which was considered essential to national progress and welfare. The *Mela* worked for the development of national literature, national songs, national gymnastics, physical culture, exhibition of various products of Indian arts and crafts and promotion of Indian products. The *Hindu Mela* sought to help the growth of Indian economy. Its annual sessions continued upto 1880 and were attended by thousands of people and created great public enthusiasm. As the *Mela* was only an annual fair the need for a permanent body to popularise the objects of the *Mela* throughout the year was keenly felt. To minister to this need the National Society (*Jatio Sabha*) was founded.

The Hindu
emphasis

The nationalism fostered by the *Hindu Mela*, as the very name suggested, had a predominantly Hindu emphasis. To the founders and organisers of the *Mela* nationalism meant unity and the basis of national unity in India, they believed, had been the Hindu religion. The growth of this Hindu tone was inevitable though a broader basis was much more desirable. The Hindu bias of Indian nationalism of this period may also be attributed to the lack of Muslim national consciousness. The Muslims, in general, were not yet taking part in the growth of Indian nationalism. There were very few nationalistic Muslims. It was not until 1874, when Sir Syed Ahmad stepped in, that the Muslim awakening took place.

The *Hindu Mela*, in spite of its Hindu emphasis, had an all-India outlook. It fostered the spirit of self-help among the people. This went a long way in building up Indian nationalism. It was a source of inspiration to many nationalists. As Rabindranath

Tagore, who still in his teens was closely associated with it along with many other members of his family, observed: "It was not fully political, but it began to give voice to the mind of our people trying to assert their own personality." On this phase of nationalism Tagore wrote: "The national movement was started to proclaim that we must not be indiscriminate in our rejection of the past. This was not a reactionary movement but a revolutionary one, because it set out with a great courage to deny and to oppose all pride in mere borrowings."

In the seventies the national movement showed signs of becoming more broad-based and wider in out-look. This change owed much to the rapidly increasing number of newspapers and journals. The approach to national problems became more rational and assertive. Sisir Kumar Ghose, the founder of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, was one of the pioneers in bringing about this change. He was one of the early exponents of the extremist school of Indian politicians. He made the nationalists aware of the dangers of Muslim demand for special privileges. As early as in 1870 he voiced the demand for a Parliament for India. He was one of the founders of the India League. This association was started in 1875 to organise political agitations in India. The India League had a very brief existence. But it indicated the growing desire for an all-India political organisation.

The Bombay Association, which was not very active for some years, was revived by Dadabhai Naoroji in 1870. But its renewed activities lasted for only two years. A few years earlier Naoroji had started

Sisir Kumar Ghose

Political organisations in Bombay and Poona

S.C.E.R.T., West Bengal

Date 7.5.84

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in England the East Indian Association. A branch of this Association was founded in Bombay in 1871, which did much to develop political ideas. The development of political ideas and organisations in western India was indebted to the efforts of K. T. Telang, Pherozeshah Mehta and Badruddin Tyabjee. The reformistic activities of M. G. Ranade also contributed to the general enlightenment of the people. The Poona Sarvajanik Sabha founded in 1867 was another important political association. It sought to give expression to the wants and wishes of the people of the Deccan. One of its principal organisers was G. K. Gokhale, a disciple of Ranade. Among other notable leaders of the Sabha were Ganesh Vasudev Joshi and Gopal Narsingh Deshpande. Political propaganda in favour of introduction of reforms in India was also carried out in England. Besides the East Indian Association mentioned above, the National Indian Association (1867) and the Indian Society (1872) were founded in London. These organisations, with the sympathy and support of liberal-minded Englishmen, did useful work for the cause of reforms in India.

Indian
Association
(1876)

A landmark in the growth of nationalism in India was the foundation of the Indian Association in 1876. One of its illustrious founders was Surendranath Banerjee, who a few years earlier had been discharged from the Civil Service on trivial grounds. He went to England in 1875 to appeal to the India Office which proved fruitless. He found the doors to the Bar closed and returned to India as a disillusioned, dejected and angry youngman. In his famous book *A Nation in Making* Surendranath writes : "The personal wrong done to me was an

illustration of the helpless impotency of our people. In the midst of impending ruin and dark, frowning misfortune, I formed the determination of addressing myself to the task of helping our helpless people in this direction of redressing our wrongs and protecting our rights, both as individuals and as a nation." On his return from England he plunged himself into the activities of the Students' Association with the object of creating among the students "a genuine sober and rational interest in public affairs." As the need for an all-India political body had become more pressing Surendranath and his co-workers founded the Indian Association.

The main objects of the Indian Association were:

(1) The creation of a strong body of public opinion in the country.

(2) The unification of the Indian races and peoples upon the basis of common political interests and aspirations.

(3) The promotion of friendly feeling between the Hindus and the Muslims.

(4) The inclusion of the masses in the great public movements of the day.

The Indian Association sought to work in co-operation with the political organisations in other provinces. It started a campaign in 1877 against the reduction of the maximum limit of age from 21 to 19 for the open competitive Examination for the Indian Civil Service. The underlying object of the movement was "the awakening of a spirit of unity and solidarity among the people of India." To mobilise nationalists all over India, Surendranath toured different provinces

The Civil
Service
agitation

in 1877-78 as a Special Delegate. The extensive lecture tour of Surendranath proved a great success and helped to strengthen nascent Indian nationalism. An all-India Memorial on the Civil Service question was addressed to the House of Commons. Lalmohan Ghose, a reputed barrister, was sent to London to represent the Indian Association. The Association also received the help of John Bright who took up its cause in England. The efforts of the Association were not altogether in vain.

Close on the heels of the Civil Service agitation were started agitations against the repressive Arms Act (1878), and the Vernacular Press Act (1878) of the reactionary Viceroy Lord Lytton. The Arms Act sought to limit the possession of arms and the second Act imposed crippling restrictions on the vernacular press. The diversion of the Famine Fund to the Afghan war added to the widespread discontent of the people. The reactionary Viceroyalty of Lord Lytton was a blessing in disguise for the growth of Indian nationalism. Slowly the more advanced among the nationalist Indians began to feel that mere agitations against objectionable Acts and Government policies would not be enough. The real solution lay in bringing the administration under the control of the Indians themselves.

The next Viceroy Lord Ripon was a true Liberal. He raised in the minds of the nationalists hopes of liberal administration and constitutional advancement. But the rude shocks of the Ilbert Bill controversy (1882) and the Contempt case of Surendranath (1883) dashed to the ground such fond hopes. In 1883, Ilbert, the Law Member of the Viceroy's Council,

Ilbert Bill
agitation
(1882)

introduced a Bill which sought to abolish the privileges enjoyed by the British-born subjects and bring them under the jurisdiction of the Indian Magistrates. This attempt only led to a repetition of the "Black Acts Controversy" days. Once again the Anglo-Indian community raised a hue and cry and violently opposed the Bill. The Indians campaigned in its favour. But ultimately even Lord Ripon had to bow before the storm and the proposed Bill was modified. This was a humiliating defeat for the Indian nationalists. As Coupland writes, "such demonstrations of a claim to racial superiority became more intolerable as nationalism strengthened its hold on Indian minds. For the principle of equal status for all nations, great and small, is the cardinal doctrine of nationalism in revolt." The obvious need of a much broader and stronger political body was keenly felt by all. The feelings of the people were also roused by the two months' imprisonment of Surendranath for contempt of court in a passage published in his paper *Bengalee*. Surendranath took serious exception to certain derogatory action of Justice Norris of the Calcutta High Court and nonchalantly remarked in his paper that such a person was unfit to be a Judge of the High Court.

To give concrete shape to the idea of a broader political organisation the Indian Association called an All-India National Conference in Calcutta. It was preceded by the starting of a National Fund to furnish the sinews of a political struggle. The first All-India National Conference, presided by Ramtanu Lahiri, was attended by representatives from different provinces. The Conference discussed and passed

All India
National
Conference
(1883)

resolutions on technical education, the covenanted Civil Service, the Arms Act, representative Government etc. Surendranath undertook another tour of upper India in 1884 to establish closer contact with Indian nationalists and strengthen the spirit of unity. The rapid growth of political ideas and the urge to set up political organisations were also evident in the foundation of the Bombay Presidency Association (1885) and the Mahajan Sabha of Madras (1884). The second All-India National Conference was also held in Calcutta in December, 1885. This coincided with the first session of the Indian National Congress which was being held in Bombay.

CHAPTER III

BEGINNING OF THE CONGRESS ERA

The year 1885, in which the first historic meeting of the Indian National Congress took place, is erroneously regarded by many as marking the birth of Indian nationalism. The origin of the Indian national movement, as discussed above, is to be traced to much earlier developments of great significance. Years of sincere efforts and organised campaigns by various men and organisations had prepared the ground for an all-India organisation. The first National Conference that met in Calcutta in 1883 was a decisive step forward in that direction. The second National Conference of 1885 was convened jointly by the British Indian Association, the Indian Association and the National Mohammedan Association. It was attended by representatives from various parts of India. The resolutions passed in the first Congress were very similar to those of the first National Conference (1883). But the members of the National Conference did not desire to set up another national organisation though they were pioneers in the field. They saw that the Congress had greater possibility of becoming a truly national organisation and they joined it in 1886. They heartily co-operated and devoted themselves to making the Congress a great success. They decided in favour of fusion as they thought that the National Conference "had no necessity for separate existence except to the detriment of the other, or

Ground
prepared
for the
Congress

possibly of both." This was a remarkable testimony to their wide outlook and wisdom.

Origin
of the
Congress

There are several views on the origin of the idea of a national Congress. One of these is that the idea originated from the Delhi *Durbar* of 1877. It has also been suggested that the idea was conceived in a private meeting of some members of the Theosophical Convention held at Madras in December, 1884. But these views lack corroborative evidence. The move for organising the Congress was first made by Allan Octavian Hume. He was a retired Civil Servant with liberal ideas and was keen on Indian progress. In 1883 Hume addressed an open letter to the graduates of the Calcutta University urging them to devote themselves earnestly and unselfishly to the cause of the progress of the country and to securing greater freedom for the Indians. He formed in 1884 the Indian National Union with branches in the big cities.

Efforts
of Allan
Octavian
Hume

In 1885 Hume met the Viceroy Lord Dufferin and placed before him a proposal that every year leading Indians should meet and discuss social matters and establish close contact among themselves. The consideration that prompted Hume to set up an organisation like the Congress was the dreadful possibility of a widespread out-break of violence in India. William Wedderburn, the autobiographer of Hume, writes that the "State of things at the end of Lord Lytton's reign was bordering upon a revolution." Commenting on the reactionary measures of Lord Lytton, Wedderburn writes : "These ill-starred measures of reaction, combined with Russian methods of police repression, brought India under Lord Lytton within measurable distance of a revolutionary out-

break, and it was only in time that Mr. Hume and his Indian advisers were inspired to intervene." Hume's apprehensions
Hume, it is said, after going through a mass of reports and recorded evidence shown to him apprehended a "terrible revolution." In a memorandum Hume wrote : " Many of the entries reported conversations between men of the lowest classes, all going to show that these poor men were pervaded with a sense of hopelessness of the existing state of affairs, that they were convinced that they would starve and die, and that they wanted to do *something*. They were going to do something, and stand by each other, *and that something meant violence.*" Hume thought of some positive action to counter-act the growing unrest. The idea of the Congress appeared to him as an effective device to ward off any such danger of violence. In Hume's own words, " A safety-valve for the escape of great and growing forces, generated by our own action, was urgently needed, and no more efficacious safety-valve than our Congress movement could possibly be devised." It was also to serve as a body for canalising the leading and progressive Indian public opinion along constitutional lines.

Dufferin showed great interest in Hume's plan. The Viceroy told Hume that one of his great difficulties was the ascertaining of the real wishes of the people. He welcomed the plan of an organisation through which the Government might be kept informed of the Indian public opinion.

Dufferin suggested that the proposed body should also discuss political questions. He expected the body to perform " the functions which Her Majesty's

Birth of the
Congress
(1885)

Opposition did in England." Hume accepted the suggestions of the Viceroy and discussed his plan with many leading Indians who also supported it. Hume then proceeded to give effect to his scheme and the first Indian National Congress met in Bombay during the Christmas week of 1885 under the Presidency of W. C. Bonnerjea, an eminent Bengali lawyer.

The first Congress was attended by 72 invitees from different parts of India. In sponsoring the Congress, Hume had expressed the hope that it would help to bring together all who were devoted to the national cause and "the Conference will form the germ of a Native Parliament and, if properly conducted, will in a few years constitute an unanswerable reply to the assertion that India is unfit for any form of representative institution."

Objects
of the
Congress

The objects of the Congress were stated by the President, W. C. Bonnerjea. These were :

- (1) Promotion of personal intimacy of and friendship amongst all the more earnest workers in the country's cause.
- (2) Eradication by direct friendly personal intercourse of all possible race, creed, or provincial prejudices in order to develop and consolidate the sentiments of national unity.
- (3) To record and discuss the representative and matured opinions of the educated classes in India on important and pressing social problems.
- (4) To formulate the lines and methods of action to be pursued by the Indian politi-

cians for public interests during the next twelve months.

The first Congress passed a number of resolutions demanding certain reforms in the administration. All the speakers expressed their loyalty to the British Crown. The first Congress has been described as "a kind of middle-class *darbar*." One speaker referred to the establishment of the British rule in India as "a merciful dispensation of Providence." The President speaking on the importance of this occasion said, "such a thing is possible under British rule, and under British rule only." It has been aptly remarked by Dr. Spear that the members of the first Congress were "almost more concerned with insisting on their loyalty and the blessings of British rule than calling for progress and reforms." But with all its limitations "a start had been made" and out of it "the political giant of the twentieth century grew."

Nature and significance of the first Congress

The second session of the Indian National Congress was held in Calcutta in 1886. It was composed of delegates elected in public meetings held for the purpose in different provinces. A broader and wider outlook was clearly evident. Dadabhai Naoroji in his Presidential address asserted that the Congress should work as a political organisation, with a political platform, and discuss only those matters which affected the whole country. Rajendralal Mitra in his address said that the people were living under "a foreign bureaucracy." Even though there was the usual expression of loyalty to the British Government the unmistakable tone of criticism and the spirit of discontent were evident. The third session held in Madras was presided over by Badruddin Tyabji. This

Second session of the Congress (1886)

Congress also evoked great enthusiasm and revealed the growing public interest in the Congress.

Growing
popularity
of the
Congress

The changing character of the Congress and the marked tone of criticism evinced in the Calcutta Session perturbed Lord Dufferin and other Government officials. Apparently, the Congress was not emerging as "Her Majesty's Opposition in India" or as "a safety-valve." The Viceroy gave vent to his annoyance by snubbing the Congress as taking a "big jump into the unknown" and slighting the Congressmen as "microscopic minority." The Government attitude of patronage began to turn into one of positive dislike. But the Congress began to gather in strength and popularity and there was increasing participation in the Congress sessions and Congress activities.

The Congress in its sessions continued to criticise the Government policy, and pass resolutions demanding reforms. But their loyalty to the Crown was always expressed and faith in English liberalism and sense of justice was reaffirmed. But there was hardly any British Government response to the Congress demands. The Congress sought to organise public opinion both in India and in England. It established a paid agency in London in 1888 which arranged lectures in England and distributed pamphlets to popularise the Congress viewpoint among the English public. The efforts did not prove abortive. The British Government response came in the form of the Indian Councils Act of 1892. The constitutional reforms introduced by the new Act fell far short of the Congress demands and expectations. But the provisions of the Act marked considerable constitutional advancement in India.

Indian
Councils Act
(1892)

"It is the natural fate of all nationalist move-

ments to split sooner or later into moderate and extremist sections—the one believing in patience, in ‘gradualness’, in progress by means of lawful agitation and constitutional reforms, the other rejecting such methods as unavailing and unending.” The Congress proved no exception to the above pattern of developments. In spite of its rapid transformation into a truly all-India organisation, and of its growing popularity, a rift in the Congress ranks became evident. The Congress expression of loyalty to the Crown in all the sessions and its “policy of prayer and petition” dissatisfied the more advanced section of the nationalists. A leaning towards the adoption of a more radical policy became discernible.

The new trend was noticeable in the writings of Arabinda Ghose who had just returned from England and had joined the State Service of Baroda. In a series of articles entitled “New Lamps for Old” in the *Induproakash* he frankly wrote that the Congress was unable to criticise the British rule fearlessly and to give the country necessary leadership. It did not really represent the masses and had not attempted to become a popular body. He emphasised the need of “Purification by Blood and Fire” and urged that the Congress movement must arouse the masses. This sharp and straight-forward criticism caused the Congress leaders much concern and annoyance. But in the Punjab the radical trend found great response. Lala Lajpat Rai, the “Lion of Punjab” in a remarkable review exposed the main weaknesses of the Congress. He showed that the Congress had failed to initiate a truly national mass movement.

Growth of
Extremism

Bal
Gangadhar
Tilak

The chief exponent of the extremist idea, as it was called, was Bal Gangadhar Tilak of Maharashtra. In his weeklies, the *Mahratta* and the *Kesari*, Tilak preached that the policy of mendicancy must give way to one of assertion of Indian rights. The future of India was to be built on her own ancient heritage. Political agitation must spread among the masses. Spirit of self-help must be developed. He organised the *Ganapati* and *Shivaji* festivals to awaken mass consciousness. In one of his many fire-brand articles Tilak analysed the causes of deterioration in India and wrote : " We are becoming so weak or lifeless that anybody may lord it over us or tyrannize over us all." In another article, referring to Congress prayers and petitions, he wrote : " Our shouting has no more affected the Government than the sound of a gnat. Let us now try to force our grievances into their ears by strong constitutional means." He stressed the need of giving political education to the villagers and bring them within the fold of the Congress. " Then only ", Tilak wrote, " will the Government realise that to despise the Congress is to despise the Indian nation. Then only will the efforts of the Congress leaders be crowned with success." Tilak was imprisoned for alleged seditious speeches in 1897 which had great repercussions on the whole country.

Moderates
and
Extremists

The Congress was now practically divided into two schools of thought—the Moderates and the Extremists. The old Congress leadership including G. K. Gokhale, Surendranath, Pherozeshah Mehta, Sankaran Nair and others belonged to the former group. Gokhale with his firm faith in the principle of co-operation, gradual reform and gentle persuasion was a true representative of the Moderate group. He

later founded the Servants of India Society (1905) which worked to foster nationalism in a religious spirit among the people. The Extremists thrived in the Punjab, Maharashtra and Bengal. Bal Gangadhar Tilak of Maharashtra, Lala Lajpat Rai of the Punjab and Bipin Chandra Pal of Bengal became famous as Lal-Bal-Pal. Their main contention was that "good government is no substitute for self-government." Tilak's slogan, "Swaraj is my birth-right and I must have it" summed up the entire extremist point of view and gave the national movement a new and attractive colouring.

The advanced political ideas and burning patriotism of the Bengali nationalists provided an excellent breeding ground for extremist trends. As early as in 1887, Aswinikumar Datta of Barisal presented a mass petition for representative Government. The Bengali nationalists were also dissatisfied, as the Congress, on the plea of being an all-India organisation, refused to discuss such vital issues as the miserable condition and suffering of the labourers employed in the Assam tea-gardens. To discuss such local but important political issues was founded the Bengal Provincial Conference in 1887. Similar organisations were soon set up in other provinces. The Provincial Conferences immensely contributed to the growth of political consciousness and patriotism among the rural people.

Another significant feature of the national movement of the period, particularly in Bengal, was the growth of what is known as the New Spirit. This was in continuation of the tradition of the *Hindu Mela*. The Industrial Exhibition of 1896 further helped to

Nationalism
in Bengal

The New
Spirit

develop this happy trend. The Chinese boycott of foreign goods, the Boer War, the Japanese awakening and other progressive international movements gave impetus to the efforts to build up Indian economy. In Bengal Swadeshi Stores were opened and campaign for Swadeshi goods was started. Sarala Devi, Satischandra Mukherjee, Jogeshchandra Choudhury, Balendranath Tagore, Rabindranath Tagore and others opened a *Swadeshi Bhandar* to popularise indigenous products. Emphasis was laid on physical culture and political education of the people. The new spirit of nationalism found refulgent reflection in contemporary literature. The success of Swami Vivekananda at Chicago and his inspiring speeches became a source of inspiration to the young nationalists. Swamiji took no direct part in politics. But his contribution to the Indian national movement was invaluable.

Reactionary
measures of
Lord
Curzon

By the end of the 19th Century nationalism had reached a new stage in Bengal. The movement in general also was assuming a shape and character which caused the British Government much concern. The increasing revolutionary tendencies in the Punjab, Maharashtra and Bengal added to their discomfort and apprehension. It was at this critical period that Lord Curzon arrived in India (1898) as the new Viceroy. He was totally out of sympathy with the Indian aspiration and had scant respect for the Congress. In 1900 he wrote: "In my belief Congress is tottering to its fall and one of my great ambitions while in India is to assist it to a peaceful demise." He took recourse to an autocratic and repressive policy to curb the growing trend of dynamic nationalism. The Municipality Act (1899) imposed

restrictions on the power of the elected Commissioners of the Calcutta Municipality. It was followed by the Indian Universities Act (1904) which sought to cripple the growth of nationalistic trends by bringing the Universities under greater Government control. The Indian nationalists were in no mood to bow before such reactionary measures. A country-wide agitation against the Act of 1904 was started. The *Dawn Society*, founded in 1902, roused patriotic feelings among the youths. Papers like *Dawn* and *New India* helped to spread extremist ideas in Bengal.

Lord Curzon, now bent on crushing the Congress and with it the Indian national aspirations, played his trump card. His first-plan of operation was to crush the nationalist solidarity in Bengal. For some time a partition of Bengal on grounds of administrative necessity was being considered. To this was now added the prospect of exploiting the separatist feelings of the Muslims. This would be a lethal blow to the nationalist cause. Prompted by these considerations Lord Curzon proceeded to give effect to his plan of partition of Bengal. It was decided to separate the divisions of Dacca, Chittagong and Rajsahi from the Province. These were to be joined to Assam, and a new Province called East Bengal and Assam was to be formed with Dacca as its capital.

The scheme
of the
partition
of Bengal



CHAPTER IV

SWADESHI AND SWARAJ

The Swadeshi Movement :

Partition
of Bengal
(1905)

The partition of Bengal was a sore challenge to the Bengali nationalists and it unleashed a broad, popular movement, unprecedented in spontaneity and far-reaching in consequence. The rumour of the proposed plan of Partition had been widespread for some time past. The decision of partition was announced on 20 July, 1905, to be effective on and from 16 October, 1905. The plan was opposed by all sections of people and the reaction in newspapers was very hostile. Krishnakumar Mitra in his *Sanjibani* gave the clarion call and urged his countrymen to boycott foreign goods and to take a solemn vow to use *Swadeshi* goods only. These patriotic proposals found warm and ready response and Rabindranath reaffirmed the peoples' unity and unflinching determination in the *Bangadarshan*. Numerous protest meetings were held including a huge one held in the Calcutta Town Hall on 7 August, 1905, indicating the depth and trend of public opinion in Bengal.

Hostile
public
reaction

The student community joined the anti-partition movement with great enthusiasm. 'Bande Mataram' was taken up as the soul-stirring slogan. Students' patriotism knew no bounds. Surendranath writes : "It was the fervour of the students that communicated itself to the whole community and inspired it

with an impulse the like of which had never been felt before." The 'Boycott' and 'Swadeshi' ideas were fostered and popularised by the vernacular newspapers and journals. This new spirit of resurgent patriotism found reflection in contemporary literature. The soulful songs and poems of Rabindranath instilled into the people a burning patriotic zeal and a sense of idealism. The plays and songs of Dwijendralal Roy, Rajanikanta Sen and others also helped increase the ardent emotional faith in the country's freedom.

A considerable section of the Muslim community led by men like Abdul Rasul, Guznavi and Liaquat Hussain pledged their support to the *Swadeshi* ideas. The movement also began to find a large measure of sympathy and support outside Bengal.

In Bengal the *Swadeshi* and *Boycott* ideas evoked response from all sections and classes of people. Popular enthusiasm was indeed unprecedented. Organisations like the *Brati Samiti*, *Bande Mataram*, *Sanatan Sampradaya* etc. were formed to promote and propagate Swadeshi ideas. Older organisations e.g. the *Dawn Society* had already been very active in popularising the new nationalist spirit.

The date of Partition, 16 October, 1905, was observed, on the suggestion of Rabindranath, as the *Rakhi Bandhan* Day. The observance signified "the indissoluble brotherhood between East Bengal men and West Bengal men, between rich and low, between Christians, Mohamedans and Hindus born of the soil." "The *Rakhi* ceremony" Rabindranath wrote, "will indicate that no monarch's sword, however powerful, can cut asunder the bond of union implanted by Providence amongst people forming one and the same

The date of Partition observed as the day of protest (16 October, 1905)

race." On that day people refrained from cooking. Shops and markets remained closed, vehicular traffic ceased and life came to a standstill. Processions were taken out and people tied *Rakhi* on each other's wrists. A mammoth public meeting was held in the evening. Ananda Mohan Bose presided over the meeting and laid the foundation of the Federation Hall. This building was to be "the mark and symbol of their indivisible union." After the meeting a huge procession was taken out to the north of the city and there another meeting was held where a large sum of money was raised for the successful operation of the Swadeshi movement. Thus was started the historic Swadeshi movement which was unique in the history of Indian nationalism. Started with an intense emotional resistance against an alien government's unwise, offensive administrative measure, the movement soon transcended its rather limited and immediate objective. It was soon transformed into a mighty upsurge with singular effects on the course of the Indian national struggle.

The
beginning
of the
Swadeshi
movement :
Boycott and
Swadeshi
programmes

The Boycott and *Swadeshi* programmes were interlinked. The success of the former depended on the success of efforts in building up home industries. As aptly remarked, "The Boycott was the negative, the Swadeshi the positive, aspect of the same idea." The two ideas became instruments of national agitation and effectively conveyed the new spirit of self-help. Textile mills, national banks, hosiery, tobacco and soap factories, tanneries, chemical works, insurance companies, etc. were set up to emphasise the positive aspect of the Swadeshi programme. Swadeshi stores were opened. Swayed by patriotism people preferred

coarser and dearer Swadeshi goods to finer and cheaper foreign ones. Groups of volunteers worked untiringly to supply the goods from door to door. Surendranath Banerjee, Bipinchandra Pal, Aswini Kumar Datta, Arabinda Ghose and others sought to make the movement as broad-based as possible. Various *Samitis*, newspapers and journals popularised the movement. Public meetings and processions, picketting, patriotic songs, bonfire of foreign goods and fiery speeches kept the spirit of nationalism living and burning at white heat.

The Swadeshi movement was now assuming the unmistakable character of a national struggle for freedom. "The question was no longer the boycott of British goods but of British rule." The Government sought to crush the movement by repressive measures. As the movement owed much of its success and popularity to the students' participation, the Government sent circulars to the educational institutions asking the authorities to take stern action against the recalcitrant student-agitators. The Government circulars, provocative as they were, raised a storm of protest. Out of this critical bitterness was born the idea of National Education i.e. an education free from Government control or influence and truer to national tradition and requirement. The immediate and aggressive reply to the Government policy of repression was the setting-up of an Anti-Circular Society. Its object was to rally the students through processions, pickettings, collection of funds and creating an awareness by patriotic songs and speeches. It also sought to provide educational facilities to students

Government
repression

expelled under Governmental orders or otherwise victimised.

Genesis of
National
Education

In a protest meeting held on 5 November, 1905, and addressed by the Poet himself, Satishchandra Mukherjee, Hirendranath Datta and other leaders, the idea of National Education took a more concrete shape. Subodh Chandra Mallik made an exemplary gift of a lakh of rupees and it was followed by another princely donation by the zamindars of Mymensingh. It was not long afterwards that the National Council of Education (*Jatiya Shiksha Parishad*) was formally inaugurated on 14 August, 1906. Under the aegis of the National Council of Education a number of National Schools were founded in various places. But these schools failed to survive for long in the absence of any real scope or opportunity for their students in future in view of the Government's hostility to the programme of 'national education.' But the Jadavpur Engineering College, established by the National Council of Education, continued to maintain a perilous but spirited existence. The transformation of this institution into the Jadavpur University in 1956 was a fitting finale, true tribute to the selfless service, idealism and devotion of its founders.

Spread
of the
Swadeshi
movement

Gradually the Swadeshi movement extended its influence outside Bengal. Ideas of *Swadeshi* and National Education found sympathetic response in Bombay, U.P., Central Provinces, Madras, Bihar and other places. In spite of mounting Government repression and terror the movement continued unabated in Bengal. The people of the district of Barisal led by Aswini Kumar Datta and inspired by the popular patriotic songs of Mukunda Das braved with fine

courage arrests and assaults, *lathi*-charges and flogging. The same spirit was manifest in other parts of the province as well. A virtual reign of terror prevailed in East Bengal and Assam on which the *Manchester Guardian* commented : "It is doubtful if Russia can afford a parallel to this petty-fogging tyranny." Indiscriminate and merciless police attack on a procession organised by the Bengal Provincial Conference held at Barisal (April, 1906) profoundly shocked the people. It only precipitated the explosion of revolutionary tendencies.

The chief exponents of the new nationalism or extremism, as it came to be called, were Tilak, Arabinda and Lajpat Rai. In June, 1906, Tilak came to Calcutta and the *Sivaji* Festival was celebrated with great enthusiasm. The *Birastami* celebrations were organised to instill courage and strength into the younger people. The Government axe of repression fell heavily on the vernacular press, particularly on the *Bande Mataram* edited by Arabinda Ghose, the *Yugantar* edited by Bhupendranath Datta and the *Sandhya* of Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya. The last-named, charged with sedition, refused to acknowledge the jurisdiction of the court. He stated that he was in no way "accountable to the alien people who happen to rule over us and whose interest is, and must necessarily be, in the way of our true national development." His premature death in the midst of the trial took away a most active mind and a remarkable personality of the age.

Restrictions on meetings, imposition of collective fines, imprisonment of leaders and deterrent punishments failed to scotch the Swadeshi movement. The

Significance
and effects
of the
movement

movement had merged with the broader national struggle. As Surendranath wrote, it was "not merely an economic or a political movement" but "an all-comprehensive movement—co-extensive with the entire circle of our national life." Even Gokhale, the Moderate leader, who disapproved of the Boycott programme as radical, regarded the movement as "a landmark in the history of national progress." He admitted that it "helped to draw closer all parts of the country in sympathy and aspiration." Gandhiji wrote that the real awakening of India "took place after the Partition of Bengal. After the Partition, people saw that petitions must be backed up by force, and that they must be capable of suffering." Before 1905, politics was confined to the upper strata. "The nationalist movement in Bengal from 1906 onwards had for the first-time shaken this up and infused a new life in the Bengali lower middle-class and to a small extent even the masses." The above appraisal of Jawaharlal Nehru gives an insight into one of the salient features of the Swadeshi movement. The mighty upsurge caused by the Partition did not die down even after the repeal of the Partition in 1911. The Partition was "a Pyrrhic Victory" which only widened the gulf between the Government and the intelligentsia and "provided the hammer to the Congress anvil to make the sparks of the new patriotism fly upward."

Split in the Congress : Morley-Minto Reforms :

The
Swadeshi
movement
fosters
extremism

The Congress, as has been noted above, was already divided into two groups—the Moderates and the Extremists. The Swadeshi movement precipitated

the crisis in the Congress and underlined the split between the two sections. The movement encouraged the growth of a radical trend both inside and outside the Congress. The extremism of Tilak caught the imagination of the younger generation. Of this period Nehru writes in his *Autobiography*: "From 1907 onwards for several years India was seething with unrest and troubles. For the first time since the Revolt of 1857 India was showing fight and not submitting tamely to foreign rule. News of Tilak's activities and his conviction, of Arabinda Ghose and the way the masses of Bengal were taking the Swadeshi and boycott pledge stirred all of us Indians in England. Almost without an exception we were Tilakites or Extremists, as the new party was called in India."

Even many Moderates in the Congress were disillusioned about the much-eulogised British sense of justice and started leaning towards extremism. But the Moderates, in general, did not fully approve of the Boycott and National Education programmes. The Congress objective, as defined in 1905, was "Colonial form of self-government." In 1906 Dadabhai Naoroji, the Congress President, went a step further when he defined it as "self-government or *Swaraj* like that of the United Kingdom or the Colonies." But the term *Swaraj* was far from clearly defined. To the Moderates, it implied self-government. To the Extremists, it meant complete autonomy free from alien rule. Arabinda Ghose, one of the chief exponents of extremism, said, "Political freedom is the life-breath of a nation." He emphasised the doctrine of passive resistance as an effective weapon in the struggle against foreign rule. "The

The
Moderate-
Extremist
breach
widens

method of passive resistor", he explained, "is to abstain from doing something by which he would be helping the Government." The programme of Boycott was explained by him as "refusal of co-operation in the industrial exploitation of our country, in education, in government, in judicial administration, in the details of official intercourse."

The Moderates totally disagreed with the Extremist doctrines of passive resistance and political freedom. They viewed these ideas as harmful and impractical. Gokhale went so far as to say that "only mad men outside lunatic asylums could think or talk of independence." The Moderates firmly believed that there was no alternative to British rule for a long time to come and constitutional agitation was the most suitable and effective form of continuing the national movement. Undoubtedly, there was much logic in the Moderate arguments. As one scholar writes, "it is difficult not to feel that the Moderates were *right at the time*, as Tilak was partly right for the future." But extremist ideas forged ahead owing to the inspiring leadership of Tilak, Arabinda, Lala Lajpat Rai, Bipinchandra Pal, Khaparde and others and the feelings and hopes raised by the Swadeshi movement.

The breach between the Moderates and the Extremists was in the meantime widening. The indications of an impending showdown were evident in the Congress sessions of 1905 and 1906. The expected clash took place in the historic Surat Session of 1907. The issues on which the split came sharp were the resolutions on Self-Government, Boycott and National Education. The session practically ended in pandemonium with the Congress organisation in the

Surat
Session
(1907) :
the open
rift

hands of the Moderates and the abrupt secession of the Extremists from the body.

The Moderates pinned their hopes on British rule "which alone could secure to the country the peace and order which were necessary for slowly evolving a nation out of the heterogeneous elements of which India was composed and for ensuring to it a steady advance in different directions." Continuance of British rule was, according to the Moderates, necessary for the best interests of the people.

The Moderates' firm faith in the British sense of justice and in the efficiency of the British rule have been attributed to the appointment of John Morley as the Secretary of State for India and Minto as Viceroy. The increasing feeling of despondency coupled with manifestation of revolutionary trends called for immediate remedial measures in the form of constitutional reforms. It was evident that a mere policy of repression would not ease the mounting tension heading for a crisis. The Government now sought to "rally" the Moderates by granting reforms. At the same time, it sought to placate the Muslims by conceding the demand for 'separate electorates.' The request for 'separate electorates' and 'weightage' had been made by a Muslim deputation led by the Aga Khan to Lord Minto. The new policy was proclaimed in the form of Morley-Minto Reforms (1909) which came into force as the Indian Councils Act of 1909. This was "a practical attempt to control and canalise the now fast-flowing current of Indian nationalism." The concessions offered failed, however, to satisfy the Extremists. The Moderates were at first jubilant but the jubilation was rather short-

The attempt to "rally" the Moderates

Morley-Minto Reforms (1909)

lived as the 'Divide and Rule' policy behind the Reforms became quite evident even to casual observers among them. The new Act was undoubtedly an advancement on the past one but at the back of it loomed up the "shadow of Pakistan." The promoters of the Reforms did not certainly think in terms of democracy. Morley himself categorically stated, "If it could be said that this chapter of reforms led directly or necessarily to the establishment of a parliamentary system in India, I for one would have nothing at all to do with it."

The
Reforms
prove
unsatis-
factory

The new Act failed to have the desired effect. Even many of the Moderates were drifting away from the Government. The new Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, repealed the Partition of Bengal in December, 1911, with the hope that it would stem the tide of rising nationalism and restore peace. But a bomb attack on him a few days later put an end to any such hope. It revealed that the malady was far too deep-rooted and extensive to be cured so easily.

War-Time Nationalism : Home Rule Movement : Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms :

The Moderate victory in the Surat Session proved ephemeral. Without the Extremists the Congress became more a party organisation than a national body. The Extremists also found it difficult to set up an effective organisation. Besides the Government repressive measures, the imprisonment of Tilak and the retirement of Arabinda from politics (February, 1910) affected the Extremists appreciably.

Dubious
loyalty
during the
First
World War

During the First World War (1914—1918), Indians in general remained loyal and co-operative in return for which they expected fulfilment of the

demand for Self-Government. But the loyalty was hardly even skindeep. On this Nehru writes : "There was little sympathy with the British in spite of loud professions of loyalty. Moderate and Extremist alike learnt with satisfaction of German victories. There was no love for Germany of course, only the desire to see our own rulers humbled." Nationalism all over the Asiatic world had made tremendous progress during the last few years. The success of Japan over Russia (1905), the Young Turk Movement (1908), The Persian Movement (1909) and the Chinese Revolution (1911) had deeply impressed the Indian nationalists. These had made them impatient with the British rule. "The older nationalists had been hoping for the freedom of their children or their children's children—the younger ones were hoping now to live to be free themselves."

Tilak, after his release in June, 1914, was keen on Moderate-Extremist unity. The declaration of war against the Allies by Turkey brightened the prospect of an alliance between the Muslim League and the Congress. Both the Congress and the League held their sessions at Lucknow in 1916. Here an alliance was concluded between the two parties which became famous as the Lucknow Pact. By this Pact the League demand for 'separate electorates' was accepted by the Congress. A joint scheme of constitutional advance on the basis of Dominion Status was adopted. It was no doubt a Congress "surrender to Moslems" but the sight of the League and the Congress marching together for a common cause raised big expectations among the nationalists. The Muslim League, though prompted by their concern

for Turkey and the Caliphate, had nevertheless, to some extent, overcome the fears deeply planted by the Aligarh Movement. In that respect the Pact was "a triumph for Indian nationalism", though it ultimately failed to stand the test of time.

Moderate-
Extremist
reunion :
decline of
the
Moderates

The Lucknow Session of the Congress also saw the re-union of the two parties—the Moderates and the Extremists. It was made possible largely owing to the initiative of Mrs. Annie Besant and the keenness of Tilak. The latter wished to make the Congress "more progressive, more militant, more active." The re-union, however, was of doubtful value and it was soon wrecked on the issue of Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms. The Moderates were losing their hold on the nationalist politics. The death of Gokhale and Pheroze Shah Mehta in 1915 had weakened the party. Tilak was now looked upon as the leader of the national struggle and the new Home Rule Movement caught the imagination of the people.

The Home Rule Movement :

The
Home Rule
League of
Mrs. Besant

Mrs. Besant, the celebrated leader of the Theosophic movement and known for her social and educational activities, joined the national movement in 1914. She sought to rouse public opinion in England in favour of the Indian demand for self-government. She founded a Home Rule League in September, 1915, with the object of demanding "Home Rule for India." The Home Rule League was not welcomed by the Moderates. They thought that its programme overlapped the Congress objective and would weaken the Congress. Branches of the Home Rule League were founded in Bombay, Madras, Allahabad, Kanpur and

other places. Mrs. Besant worked untiringly to popularise the idea of Home Rule among the masses through personal contact and the two organs *New India* and *Common Weal*.

Another great protagonist of the Home Rule idea was Tilak. On his initiative was founded the Indian Home Rule League in April, 1916. Its object was "to attain Home Rule or Self-Government within the British Empire by all constitutional means and to educate and organize public opinion in the country towards the attainment of the same." Through his writings and speeches he raised public support for the scheme of *Swaraj*. His intense patriotism, selfless service to the cause of nationalism and bold leadership earned for Tilak the affectionate honorific *Loka Manya*.

The Indian Home Rule League founded by Tilak (1916)

The two Home Rule Leagues of Mrs. Besant and Tilak worked in close co-operation. The movement made rapid progress and created great public enthusiasm. This caused the Government serious concern and it took measures to check its progress. Mrs. Besant was interned which caused popular resentment. It only helped to excite the intelligentsia and vitalised the Home Rule Movement. Even the Moderates were displeased with the Government action. The Congress and the Muslim League were considering the question of adopting Passive Resistance for achieving political objectives which made the Government much concerned, particularly as the British then were wholly pre-occupied with the First World War. The public opinion in England was also running in favour of adopting a new and more liberal policy to the Indian problem. The British Government had to take cognizance of the changing situation and announced a new

Progress of the Home Rule Movement

The British Government announce a new policy (1917)

policy. The announcement made on 20 August, 1917, by Edwin Montagu, the Secretary of State for India, stated : "The policy of His Majesty's Government, with which the Government of India are in complete accord, is that of the increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire." Montagu came to India to ascertain public opinion and discuss the practical aspects of the policy enunciated. Its outcome was the famous Montagu-Chelmsford *Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms* (22 April, 1918). The substance of the recommendations was embodied in the Government of India Act of 1919 which came into force in 1921.

Montagu-
Chelmsford
Report
(April,
1918)

The Montagu-Chelmsford Report belied the great expectations raised by the original announcement of Montagu. The new Act undoubtedly marked considerable progress in the process of constitutional development started in 1861. Still it fell far short of the demand and expectation of the Indian nationalists. The Report caused the final split in the Congress. The Moderates welcomed the Report and viewed it as a definite advancement to the realisation of self-government. They were in favour of giving the reforms a trial and keen on co-operating with the Government in implementing the Act. Explaining the Moderate stand, Surendranath writes, "We accepted the Reforms for what they were worth. We knew their limitations. But in the existing circumstances it seemed to us that the best thing we could do was to work them, to qualify for more and press for more.

The Report
causes final
split in the
Congress

Here was an opportunity for peaceful, orderly and progressive realization of self-government." But the Extremists were thoroughly disappointed with the Report and favoured its total rejection. The Moderates had by now lost their hold on the Congress organisation which was at the moment dominated by the Extremists led by Tilak. Even Montagu had said : "The Congress is completely identified with Home Rule."

In a special session held in Bombay (August, 1918) the Congress reiterated the demand for Self-Government and condemned the Report as inadequate, disappointing and unsatisfactory. It passed a number of resolutions proposing modifications. The Moderate leaders, in view of the known attitude of the Extremists who had a vast majority in the Congress, boycotted the session. Most of the Moderates, leaving the Congress, later founded the Indian Liberal Federation and came to be known as Liberals.

Moderates
set up the
Indian
Liberal
Federation

It is not difficult to explain the Extremist attitude of hostility to the new proposals. During the First World War nationalism had made rapid strides in India. It was not easy for Indian nationalists, as Coupland admits, "to accept the claim of a foreign Parliament to decide whether and where and to what extent Indians had shown themselves fit for self-government." Besides this was involved the question of British sincerity and intentions. The Indian nationalists had their doubts which were soon confirmed by the notorious Rowlatt Bills and the atrocious incidents in the Punjab.

Causes of
Extremist
doubts

In the meantime the Home Rule Movement had become more popular and powerful. The Govern-

ment's refusal to give passports to a Home Rule delegation to England led by Tilak caused much discontent and agitation. Ultimately, Tilak was allowed to leave for England in September, 1919, where he sought to popularise the Indian nationalist view-points through meetings, speeches and conferences.

Revolutionary Activities :

Revolutionary activities or 'terrorism', as these were popularly known, constituted an important aspect of the Indian struggle for independence. Outside the broad sphere of Congress politics a militant spirit of nationalism had been growing steadily. These militant nationalists had no faith in the apparently labourious and long path of constitutional agitations. These men, very small in number but charged with fiery patriotism and bitter hatred for the foreign rule, thought of more direct and violent ways of ending the British rule in India.

Early revolutionary activities

Towards the end of the nineteenth century secret societies were formed in Bengal and Maharashtra. The young revolutionaries received inspiration from the writings and speeches of Tilak, Arabinda, Bankimchandra, Swami Vivekananda and others. A number of secret societies formed in Bengal in the last quarter of the nineteenth century did not have any concrete revolutionary plan or programme. But one of the earliest positive efforts was that of W. B. Phadke of Bombay. He founded a revolutionary society with the object of putting an end to the British rule in India by organising an armed rebellion. The scheme failed and Phadke suffered terribly. But his name and efforts continued to serve as an inspiring example

for future Indian revolutionaries. After a comparative period of lull, revolutionary activities revived partly owing to the influences of the *Ganapati* and *Sivaji* festivals organised by Tilak. The most notable incident was the execution of the Chapekar brothers in 1897 for murdering two unpopular British officers in Poona. There were sporadic revolutionary activities in western and central India towards the end of the nineteenth century. Notable among the revolutionary societies of the period was the *Arya Bandhab Samaj* with which Tilak was connected. Among other members of this association were P. S. Khankhoje, Vrajachand Potdar and Jannalal Bajaj.

Revolutionary tendencies were also growing in Bengal. One of the pioneers of revolutionary activities in Bengal was Pramatha Mitra, a barrister. He was the President of the *Anushilan Samity*, one of the earliest and most famous secret societies in Bengal. It received active help and encouragement from Swami Saradananda, Sister Nivedita, Arabinda Ghose and C. R. Das. Among others connected with the growth of this revolutionary society were Satish Chandra Bose, Ashutosh Choudhury, Jatindranath Banerjee, Barindra Kumar Ghose and Surendranath Tagore. There was close contact between the revolutionaries of Bengal and Maharashtra. This was largely owing to the efforts of Sakharam Ganesh Deuskar—a Marathi scholar who made significant contribution to the growth of nationalism and national education in Bengal.

The Swadeshi movement greatly helped the growth of revolutionary tendencies. Moreover, contemporary current of world events had a telling

The growing
impatience
with the
British rule

effect on the young patriots in the Punjab, Maharashtra, Central India, Bengal and other parts of the country. The defeat of the Italian Army at Adowa in 1894 at the hands of the Abyssinians, the victory of Japan over mighty Russia, the Young Turk movement etc. made the young patriotic Indians more emotional and impatient. On this state of feeling at the turn of the century Coupland writes : "Freedom as a far-off goal was no longer enough. They wanted it not only for their sons but for themselves. And it was not so much with the backward state of India that they felt impatient now : it was with the British Raj." Radical papers and journals gave vent to this feeling of discontent and impatience. The Government policy of terror and repression and attempts to gag the press led to outbreak of violence. Bombs were manufactured and attempts on the lives of unpopular government officials became frequent. An attempt was made on the life of a most unpopular judge named Kingsford by Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki on 30 April, 1908. Prafulla Chaki committed suicide to evade arrest and Khudiram was tried and hanged. Both these young revolutionaries became household names in Bengal and were honoured among the first martyrs to the cause of freedom. A few days later the police searched and found a bomb factory in Maniktala, Calcutta and arrested a large number of revolutionaries including Arabinda and his brother Barindra Kumar Ghose. The trial of these men became famous as the Alipore Bomb Case. In course of the trial the approver, the Public Prosecutor and a police officer were assassinated. Most of the accused were convicted and sentenced to long terms

Alipore
Bomb Case

of imprisonment and transportation for life. But Arabinda was acquitted mainly owing to the brilliant pleading of his counsel C. R. Das.

The Dacca *Anushilan Samiti* led by Pulinbihari Das continued to carry out terrorist activities and revolutionary propaganda with great zeal. Branches of the *Anushilan Samiti* had also sprang up in other parts of East Bengal, North Bengal, Chandernagore and other places. Similar secret societies had also been formed in Bihar, Orissa, the Punjab, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Madras. Notable among the revolutionaries in the Punjab during this period were Ajit Singh, Amba Prasad, Lala Hardayal and Lajpat Rai. The last named, though actively connected with the Congress, had secret contact with the revolutionaries. In Maharashtra foremost among the revolutionary associations was the *Abhinava Bharat* set up in 1904. V. D. Savarkar, later to become famous as a Hindu Mahasabha leader, was one of the most active and leading revolutionaries in Maharashtra. The *Abhinava Bharat* did much to disseminate revolutionary ideas among the youth by emphasising on physical culture which included sword and lathi plays, riding, swimming and mountain-climbing. The educational institutions provided good breeding ground for revolutionary ideas and activities. One of its members, P. N. Bapat, was sent to Paris to learn the art of bomb-making from Russian revolutionaries. The *Abhinava Bharat* had close contact with other secret societies of western and central India. A plot to manufacture bombs was discovered by the police. This led to the Kolhapur Bomb Case in which the convicted revolutionaries had to suffer long terms of

*Abhinava
Bharat*

imprisonment. K. G. Khare and Karve in Maharashtra, Arjun Lal Sethi, Bharat Keshari Singh, Rao Gopal Singh in Rajasthan, Vanchi Aiyar, Nilakanta Brahmachari in Madras were some of the well-known revolutionaries of this period. Revolutionary activities had intensified in Bengal and in December, 1908, several prominent Bengali leaders including Aswini Kumar Datta and Krishna Kumar Mitra were deported. The same year Tilak was sentenced to 6 years' transportation which caused great excitement throughout the country.

Indian
revolu-
tionaries
abroad

Revolutionary activities and propaganda were also conducted outside India in Indo-China, Singapore, Siam, Afghanistan, in the U.S. and in Germany. One of the pioneers among Indian revolutionaries abroad was Shyamji Krishnavarma. In 1905 he founded the Indian Home Rule Society in London and started the journal *Indian Sociologist*. He gathered round him a group of revolutionaries and the centre of their activities was the 'Indian House' founded by Shyamji in London. A close associate of Shyamji was Madam Cama. She continued revolutionary propaganda in Europe and America. Among other notable Indian revolutionaries abroad were Raja Mahendra Pratap and Sardar Singh Rana. In 1913 the Ghadar Party was formed in the U.S. with Indian workers and students, mostly Punjabis, with the object of overthrowing the British rule. For some time the Ghadar movement was very active in the U.S. and drew public attention. A few years earlier Tarak Nath Das and others had founded the Indian Independence League (1907) in California. Lala Hardayal was one of the most active members of the League.

During all these years revolutionary activities had *Bagha* Jatin intensified in Bengal. Attempts were made during the First World War to establish contact with Indian revolutionaries abroad. One of the most remarkable efforts was a secret scheme of an armed rebellion with arms and ammunitions imported from abroad with German help. The plot was unearthed by the police. But the plot was made memorable by a heroic struggle put up by Jatindranath Mukherjee against the police forces at Balasore in course of which he courted death valiantly on 9 September, 1915. For his unique courage and fighting qualities Jatindranath earned the affectionate honorific of *Bagha* (Tiger) Jatin. Rash Bihari Bose was another well-known revolutionary of this period. Enjoying a high position in public life he was secretly connected with revolutionary activities in northern India. He was the brain behind the attempted assassination of Viceroy Hardinge (December, 1912). After the failure of a plot of armed rising in February, 1915, he escaped to Japan and continued his revolutionary activities there.

Rash Bihari
Bose

CHAPTER V

A NEW LEADER AND A NEW ERA

Rowlatt
Act (1919)

Visible signs of unrest among the masses, post-war atmosphere of expectation mixed with fear and anxiety and the spread of revolutionary activities prompted the Government to perpetuate its wartime reactionary measures. In 1919 a Committee headed by Mr. Justice Rowlatt was appointed to investigate the alarming growth of revolutionary activities and to make recommendations for their effective suppression. The Committee in its Report suggested most coercive measures with curtailment of the liberty of the people. On the basis of the Report was passed the ill-famed Rowlatt Act which provided for arrest and trial even without a show of normal legal procedure.

Gandhiji
assumes
leadership

The Rowlatt Act roused the people's righteous indignation and stirred even the Moderates to raise their voice of protest. The anti-Rowlatt Act agitation brought to the fore of the national movement a new leader with a new technique, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. Gandhiji had first attracted attention by his successful application of *Satyagraha* or passive moral resistance for vindicating the rights of the Indians in South Africa. On his return from South Africa he had been drawn to the Indian national movement. He had founded an *Ashrama* at Ahmadabad (1915) on the banks of the Sabarmati to teach Indians the ideals and method of *Satyagraha*. In April, 1917, he earned admiration by leading a successful move-

ment, rather a mission, which put an end to the miserable sufferings of the peasants of Champaran in North Bihar. His recourse to the first of his many historic fasts had led to a satisfactory settlement of a long-drawn dispute between mill-owners and labourers of Ahmadabad.

Gandhiji's appeal to the Viceroy against the Rowlatt Bills was ignored. He then assumed leadership of the first all-India agitation. He founded the *Satyagraha Sabha* whose members were pledged to disobey the Act and court arrest voluntarily. This novel method of agitation appealed to the Indian people. The first reaction of the young nationalists, as Nehru writes, was "one of tremendous relief." It was to them "a way out of the tangle, a method of action which was straight and open and possibly effective." The whole country witnessed a unique and spontaneous outburst of mass agitation. The Government tried to put it down with an iron hand and did not hesitate to take atrocious and brutal steps. But the most heinous criminal action was that of General Dyer. His troops opened relentless fire without warning on thousands of unarmed people assembled for a prohibited meeting at Jallianwalla Bagh in Amritsar (13 April, 1919). There was no means of exit from the park and scores of people were killed and injured in the firing. The massacre of Jallianwalla Bagh was followed by martial law and a veritable reign of terror in the Punjab. The shocking and dreadful news of Government atrocities in the Punjab profoundly pained and moved all sections of Indians. The feelings of the people were voiced by Rabindranath in his immortal letter to the Viceroy

Satyagraha

Punjab
happenings

Jallianwalla
Bagh
massacre

renouncing the Knighthood as a protest against the massacre of Jallianwalla Bagh. As soon as the martial law was withdrawn relief work was organised led by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Swami Shraddhananda and others.

Gandhiji was deeply grieved at the Punjab incidents. But he was more distressed to see that the agitation started by him had not altogether been free from violence, for *Ahimsa* was one of the cardinal principles of *Satyagraha*. He admitted his failure to apply *Satyagraha* in its true spirit and regretted his "Himalayan miscalculation."

Amritsar
Congress
(1919)

The Amritsar Session of the Congress (December, 1919) was the "first Gandhi Congress." Gandhiji emerged from it as the unquestioned leader of the national movement. Motilal Nehru had appealed to the Liberals to join this session. He urged on them to respond to the call of "the lacerated heart of the Punjab." But the appeal went unheeded. The Congress had already denounced the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms as unsatisfactory. Still Gandhiji persuaded the Congress to soften its attitude so as to give the new Reforms a fair trial. But it did not take long before the national movement changed its course and Gandhiji's policy and programme took an altogether different line. The sudden and dramatic change was caused by the beginning of the Khilafat movement in India. Gandhiji supported the movement as he saw in it the possibility of cementing Hindu-Muslim unity—a cause which was very dear to his heart. But before dwelling on the origin of the Khilafat and the subsequent Non-co-operation Movement it is necessary to review the growth of

Muslim consciousness and the Muslim attitude to political developments in the preceding years.

Muslim attitude : the Aligarh Movement and its effect on Muslim political ideas :

In all spheres of life and thought in the 19th Century the Muslims in India were decidedly less advanced than the Hindus. This backwardness was very much in evidence in the slow growth of political consciousness and national sentiment. That Indian nationalism and political agitation in the 19th Century had a distinct Hindu element and leadership cannot be overlooked. One of the weaknesses of the nationalist movement was that it failed to develop a pan-Indian patriotism. This was perhaps unavoidable and natural under existing conditions, but nevertheless unfortunate. The explanation is, however, not far to seek. The Muslims in general were hostile to the establishment of the British rule in India. It was Muslim rule which the British had supplanted. Not unnaturally "Moslem minds leapt back across the interval in which the Mogul Empire was collapsing to the period of its prime and regarded the British as usurpers of the Mogul throne." The introduction of secular English education and the replacement of the Persian by the English language naturally hurt their pride. The Muslims suffered from a sense of humiliation which caused their indifference, if not antipathy to English education. But English education, it was not realised, was the most important contributing factor to Indian awakening and political awareness. Thus Muslims failed to fruitfully participate in the general development which owed its

Moslem backwardness in the 19th Century : its causes

origin to Western thought and science. New political ideas meant little to them, while "probably the average Hindu student at this time knew more about liberal doctrines and nationalist movements in Europe than most young Englishmen."

Thus, while nationalism was fast spreading among the Hindu intelligentsia, the Muslims in general remained aloof. The Wahabi movement had some repercussions on the Indian Muslims but it hardly left any lasting influence. In comparison with numerous predominantly Hindu organisations there was only one notable Muslim organisation viz. the National Mohammedan Association of Nawab Abdul Latif. Muslim participation in political agitations was limited to a few enlightened individuals.

Sir Syed
Ahmad

A new era was ushered in by Sir Syed Ahmad. He came of an aristocratic well-to-do Muslim family. Beginning from a lower rank in the Civil Service he rose to the enviable position of a member of the Governor-General's Legislative Council in 1878. Syed Ahmad was keenly aware of the backwardness of his community and rightly diagnosed the malady, originating in the apathy to English education. He urged the Muslims to react positively to Western education and modern scientific knowledge. He also advocated social reforms in Muslim society on rational lines. He was an admirer of the British. A short visit to England impressed him immensely and made him a more ardent admirer of English culture and education. English education according to him was a desideratum for the Muslim in India. So he founded at Aligarh in 1877 the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College for imparting English education to the Muslims. This

Aligarh
College
founded
(1877)

institution, later to become the Muslim University of Aligarh, rendered great service to Muslim educational advancement and political consciousness.

Syed Ahmad was a patriot. But he gradually became inclined to the view that as the Hindus were far ahead of the Muslims in education and other respects, the Muslims in their own interest should keep away from the new nationalism. Moreover, in view of Muslim backwardness and minority, all political concessions to Indians should be accompanied by safeguards for the Muslims. He firmly planted among them the fear of Hindu dominance in case representative government was introduced in India. His attitude was that Democracy, being majority rule, would in India mean Hindu rule. He urged the members of his community to co-operate with the British. This, according to him, was essential to avoid eclipse and absorption by the Hindus. He was opposed to the Congress and its programme. To counter the Congress he founded the United Patriotic Association in 1888. In 1886 he had founded the Annual Muslim Educational Conference which helped to disseminate Muslim political ideas. Thus, as Coupland observes, "The Moslem recoil from Congress nationalism was mainly Ahmad's doing."

Fear of
Hindu
domination
planted

The centre of this new Muslim outlook and policy was the Aligarh College for which it became famous as the Aligarh Movement. A zealous exponent of the new doctrine was Mr. Beck, the Principal of the College, from 1883 to 1899. His mouthpiece was the college organ *Institute Gazette*. The Aligarh Movement succeeded in alienating the bulk of the Muslims

from the national movement and in doing so, sowed the seeds of the "two-nation" theory.

The Swadeshi movement succeeded in drawing a large number of Muslims within its fold. But the Muslim masses in general remained unresponsive or indifferent to keeping pace with the main current and directional trends of Indian nationalism. They had viewed with suspicion and apprehension the Extremists' action of recalling the past glories of Hindu India by holding the *Sivaji* and *Ganapati* festivals. The Muslims of East Bengal, led by Nawab Salimullah of Dacca, welcomed the Partition in the hope of gaining preference and other advantages in the new Province. The annual Muslim Educational Conference held in December, 1906, welcomed and approved the Partition of Bengal. The Aga Khan led a Muslim delegation in August, 1906, to plead for separate Muslim electorates in the coming constitutional reforms. The demand, as stated above, was conceded in the Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909.

Growth of
separatism

In 1908, on the initiative of Nawab Salimullah of Dacca, was founded the Muslim League to remove the long-felt need of a political organisation for the Muslims. The Muslim League firmly adhered to the policy of separation and opposed the national movement led by the Congress. This growth of Muslim separatism provided the British Government with a very effective weapon to weaken the Indian national movement. The principle of 'separate electorate', originally devised by Morley and Minto, and conceded in the Morley-Minto Reforms, satisfied the Muslims but widened the gulf between the Hindus and the Muslims. In spite of Congress abhorrence and opposi-

Moslem
League
founded
(1908)

tion the communal approach began to be clearly lined. This proved a stumbling block in the path of a united struggle for Self-Government. Intermittent communal riots worsened the already strained relations between the two communities. The Lucknow Pact of 1916, however, considerably improved the situation. The defeat and humiliation of Turkey in the First World War and the British policy towards the former offended the feelings of Indian Muslims and led to the Khilafat movement.

Khilafat leads to Non-Co-Operation :

The main object of the Khilafat movement was to force the British Government to change its attitude to Turkey and restore the Turkish Sultan i.e. the *Khalif* to his former position. The movement was started in India in 1920 by the Ali brothers, Muhammad Ali and Shaukat Ali. Gandhiji had genuine sympathy for the cause and he saw in it an opportunity for cementing the Hindu-Muslim entente as "will not occur for another hundred years." The Congress lent full support to the movement. In March, 1920, Gandhiji issued a manifesto in which he announced his famous doctrine of Non-Violent Non-Co-operation for mobilising the people for a united mass movement.

Gandhiji
supports
Khilafat
movement

The principle of Non-Co-Operation was adopted by the Central Khilafat Committee. The movement was formally started on 1 August, 1920, a day also memorable for the death of Tilak. In a special session held in Calcutta the Congress adopted the resolution on Non-Co-Operation moved by Gandhiji. In the Resolution Gandhiji made it clear that besides

Factors
leading to
Non-Co-
Operation

the question of Khilafat, the Non-Co-Operation movement was to be launched in view of the Punjab atrocities, the subsequent exoneration of Sir Michael O' Dwyer, the Lt. Governor of the Punjab, and other guilty officers and finally the establishment of *Swarajya* which alone could only "vindicate national honour" and "prevent repetition of similar wrongs in future." The Non-Co-Operation was also "conceived as a measure of discipline and self-sacrifice without which no nation can make real progress." The bleeding heart of the Punjab had deeply moved Gandhiji and was largely responsible for the change from his earlier policy of co-operation. The Government's callousness now made him declare that "Co-operation in any shape or form with this satanic government is sinful."

Non-Co-
Operation
programme

The Non-Co-Operation programme included surrender of titles, honorary offices, resignation from nominated seats in local bodies, boycott of Government functions, withdrawal of children from Government controlled and aided institutions, establishment of national schools and boycott of British Courts, legislature etc. Great emphasis was laid on the promotion of Swadeshi, hand spinning and weaving, removal of untouchability and collections for the *Swarajya* fund among other items. The *Charka* (spinning wheel) and manufacture of *Khaddar* became the symbol of the resurgent national sentiment.

Non-Co-
Operation
Movement

The Non-Co-Operation movement became a mighty tidal wave sweeping through the length and breadth of the whole country and drawing into it all sections of people. It was highlighted by the renunciation of legal practice by Motilal Nehru and Chitta

Ranjan Das, and resignation from the Civil Service by young Subhas Chandra Bose. Among other notable participants were C. Rajagopalachari, Gopabandhu Das, the brothers Vithalbhai and Vallabhbhai Patel, J. M. Sen Gupta, Ajmal Khan, Sarojini Naidu, S. Srinivasa Iyengar, Abul Kalam Azad, Jawaharlal Nehru, Lala Lajpat Rai and the Ali brothers. Students came out of their schools and colleges and joined the movement in thousands. The arrest of the Ali brothers only intensified the movement. People courted arrest voluntarily. Nehru gives a very amusing story that the Superintendent of the packed Lucknow prison used to tell the jailor, who was a Khan Sahib, that if he could succeed in allowing some of the Congress prisoners to escape then he would be recommended for the title of Khan Bahadur. The movement also swayed poor Sikh peasants in the Punjab to revolt against gross evils and abuses prevailing in some Sikh temples. In the South, the Muslim peasantry of Malabar, known as Moplahs, rose against money-lenders and landlords who were mostly Hindus. But this rising unfortunately assumed a communal character and caused much innocent bloodshed.

The Non-Co-Operation movement alarmed the Government. The Prince of Wales was brought to India to evoke the traditional feelings of loyalty. But the day of his arrival in India (17 November, 1921) was observed as *Hartal* in Bombay and parts of the country. The Congress had decided to boycott the Royal visit. The visit thus failed to have the desired effect.

In its Ahmadabad Session held in December,

Programme
of Civil
Disobedience

1921, the Congress adopted a resolution approving Non-Co-Operation and urging the people to organise individual and mass Civil Disobedience. Gandhiji was appointed as "the sole Executive authority of the Congress" to launch Civil Disobedience. On 1 February, 1922, Gandhiji announced his decision to start mass Civil Disobedience in Bardoli in Surat district of the Bombay Presidency. The announcement caused great expectation and excitement. But Gandhiji suspended the proposed Civil Disobedience because of a sudden mob violence on a police station at Chauri Chaura in U.P. killing twenty-two policemen. Gandhiji's decision caused great disappointment. But the Congress Working Committee meeting at Bardoli a few days later approved the suspension of Non-Co-Operation and Civil Disobedience. Gandhiji was arrested and tried in March, 1922, and was sentenced to six years' simple imprisonment. This did not produce the expected upheaval and thus came to end the Non-Co-Operation movement. Evidently, as the Congress Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee admitted in its Report, the country was not yet prepared for a mass Civil Disobedience movement. Moreover, with the transformation of Turkey into a secular republican state under Kamal Pasha, the Khilafat movement had collapsed. This had seriously affected the Non-Co-Operation movement. And with it the glowing prospect of a Hindu-Muslim entente "dissolved like a summer thundercloud."

Violence
at Chauri
Chaura :
The Move-
ment
suspended

Significance
of the
Non-Co-
Operation
Movement

The Non-Co-Operation movement is a landmark in the Indian struggle for independence. It was a mass movement whose message reached the remotest village. It generated a feeling of freedom and helped

remove the deep-rooted feeling of frustration and helplessness. It enhanced the *morale* of the people and inspired them to challenge the old colonialist mentality. It had raised national dignity. The solid values of mass organisation, discipline and sacrifice were learnt by experience. Gandhiji had "converted the nationalist movement into a revolutionary movement." Its ultimate gain outweighed the immediate losses. The Congress had become a force to reckon with and hereafter it went on from strength to strength.

Post-Non-Co-Operation years : Swarajya Party :

The suspension of the Non-Co-Operation movement followed by Gandhiji's arrest and sentence led some Congress men to explore other methods of continuing the national struggle. Some of them, led by Chitta Ranjan Das and Motilal Nehru thought of contesting the elections to the Legislative Councils with the object of wrecking the reforms from within by "uniform, consistent and continuous obstruction." But others in the Congress were opposed to this policy and programme as it went against the basic Congress principle of Non-Co-Operation. But in reply to this it was argued that a changing situation justified a change in policy. Within the Congress there were now two schools of thought—the No-changers and the Pro-changers. Though in its annual session at Gaya, December, 1922, the Congress voted in favour of the No-changers, yet Pro-changers founded the Swarajya Party to contest the elections to the Councils and carry out its programme of wrecking the reforms from within. The danger of a formal split in the Congress

Swarajya
Party
formed

was however averted and the Swarajya Party started to function as an integral part of the Congress.

New
Reforms
do not
work well

The new constitution which had come into force in 1921, being boycotted by the Congress, was working none too well. Excepting in Madras where the Justice Party had developed into a well organised and disciplined party, the new Act failed to achieve anything or fulfil any expectation. The Liberals, pressed between peoples' non-co-operation and the Government's unresponsive rigid policy and attitude, were in an unenviable situation. The Liberal party itself was too loosely knit and ill-financed to form stable ministries and work out constructive programmes.

Failure
of the
Swarajyists

The Liberals were routed by the Swarajya nominees in the elections of November, 1923. The Swarajya Party "for the first time, brought a new and aggressive element in the Councils." But within a few years the Swarajyists found it difficult to do much in the Council politics. The death of C. R. Das in 1925 not only weakened the Swarajyists but also took away one of the most outstanding national leaders. The Swarajya Party ultimately walked out of the legislatures without attaining its objectives. During this period a number of other Indian political parties were founded. Notable among these were the Hindu Mahasabha and the Communist Party of India. The former was pledged to protect and promote the interests of the Hindus while the latter concentrated more on the trade union and peasant movements.

Communal
riots :
period of
depression

The end of the Khilafat movement followed by the suspension of Non-Co-Operation had an adverse effect on Hindu-Muslim relations. Frequent deplorable communal riots began to break out since 1923.

The Muslim League, which had so long been passing through a lean period, again became prominent under the leadership of M. A. Jinnah. An All-Parties Conference and even a 21-day fast by Gandhiji failed to have the desired effect on communal relations. The British Government's policy and attitude to the demand for Self-Government remained unchanged. So the national movement seemed to have struck a bad patch.

Anti-Simon agitations : Reinvigorated Nationalism :

The drooping spirit of the national movement received a much-needed fillip from the appointment of the Simon Commission. The demand for Self-Government was growing in India. Even the Liberals were disappointed with the Government of India Act of 1919. The British Government felt the need of a fresh review of the political situation in India. The announcement was made in November, 1927. All the seven members of the Commission being British, opposition to this exclusive foreign composition of the Commission provided a common meeting ground for all the political parties. The Commission, on its arrival in India in February, 1928, was boycotted by the Congress, the Liberals and a large section of the Muslims. Besides the question of its composition, the Congress was opposed to the Simon Commission on the ground that there could be no question of "an enquiry into our fitness for Swaraj or for any measure of responsible Government."

The Simon Commission met with black flag and hostile demonstrations. In one such demonstration at

Appoint-
ment of the
Simon
Commission
(1927)

Anti-Simon
demon-
strations

Lahore Lala Lajpat Rai was seriously injured in a wanton police assaults on the agitators. His death shortly afterwards was naturally attributed to this injury and intensified the people's wrath and determination. Pandit Govinda Ballabh Pant also received serious injuries from a police *lathi* charge on anti-Simon demonstrators in Lucknow from which he never completely recovered. Jawaharlal Nehru himself, being in the thick of the fray, was another victim of this humiliating treatment. Thus the whole country was once again in ferment and "an intended gesture of good will became a rallying cry for freedom."

All-Parties
Conference :
Nehru
Report

A more positive aspect of the movement was an All-Parties Conference which met at Lucknow in August, 1928, to produce a draft constitution for India. This was to be an effective reply to the Secretary of State for India, Lord Birkenhead's challenge to the Indian nationalists "to produce a constitution which carries behind it a fair measure of general agreement" among the Indian people. The Conference accepted a draft constitution framed by a Committee, headed by Motilal Nehru. It became famous as the Nehru Report or the Nehru Constitution. In the Report, Dominion Status was accepted as the goal and its attainment was regarded as "the next immediate step." It repudiated 'separate electorates' and 'weightage' and provided for security for the Muslims by the principle of provincial autonomy. The accord reached in the All Parties Conference, however, proved shortlived. It was rejected a few months later by the Muslim League led by Jinnah. An All-India Muslim Conference (January, 1929) adopted resolutions on Muslim demands. These included retention of

Demands
of the
Muslim
League

'separate electorates' and 'weightage', a federal constitution with maximum provincial autonomy and vesting of 'residual powers' in the Provinces. Thus once again the communal question wrecked the possibility of a united front for a common cause. The pro-Congress Nationalist Muslim Party formed by Dr. M. A. Ansari failed to achieve much. It could hardly reach the Muslim masses. The death of Ajmal Khan was also a distinct loss to the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity.

In its annual session, held in Madras in 1927, the Congress had declared complete Independence as its goal. In view of that the Congress acceptance of the goal of Dominion Status, as laid down by the Nehru Report, was thought to be step backward, if not a positive climb down. The younger section of the Congress, led by Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose, had founded the Independence for India League. The Left wing in the Congress was very unhappy with this modification of the Congress objective. There was possibility of a clash in the Calcutta Session (1928) of the Congress between the two schools of opinion. After lively discussions in the session the Congress agreed to accept Dominion Status, if it was granted by the British Government within a year. Failing that, the Congress would revert to its goal of Independence and "will organize a campaign of non-violent Non-Co-Operation." It was a skilful compromise for which Gandhiji had worked.

Calcutta
Session of
the Congress
(1928) :
one-year
grace
offered

The year 1928 witnessed remarkable developments. As Nehru writes : "Early in 1925 India was still quiescent, passive, perhaps not fully recovered from the effort of 1919-1922 ; in 1928 she seemed

1928 :
a year of
significant
develop-
ments

fresh, active, and full of suppressed energy. Everywhere there was evidence of this : among the industrial workers, the peasantry, middle-class youth, and the intelligentsia generally." The Trade Union movement, led by the All-India Trade Union Congress, had become powerful. Industrial disturbances took place in various parts of the country. There were indications of peasants' unrest especially in U.P. and Gujarat. The heroic struggle of the peasants of Bardoli, led by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel against Government attempt to increase revenue, earned the admiration of the whole country. The youth movement became popular and widespread. Innumerable Youth Leagues were founded and Youth conferences enthusiastically held. Besides these, there were the anti-Simon agitations and the sitting of the All-Parties Conference. Revolutionary activities were also spreading fast. Indeed, the political situation was explosive and full of possibilities.

Ramsay
Macdonald's
announcement
(31 October,
1929)

In 1929 the Labour Party came to power in Britain. Simon wrote a letter to the Premier, Ramsay Macdonald, suggesting a conference of the representatives of both British India and the Indian States, for reaching an agreement as wide as possible. The suggestion was accepted and on 31 October, 1929, the Viceroy Lord Irwin declared that "it is implicit in the declaration of 1917 that the natural issue of India's constitutional progress, as there contemplated, is the attainment of Dominion Status." He also announced that a Round Table Conference would be summoned soon. The declaration was generally welcomed by Indian leaders. But the Viceroy was unable to give the assurance, as demanded by Gandhiji, that Dominion

Status was immediately forthcoming. This gave way to disappointment and the Congress was set to launch another mass movement.

Civil Disobedience Movement :

Jawaharlal Nehru presided over the annual session of the Congress, held in Lahore (December, 1929). The election of Nehru indicated the growing strength of the Left wing in the Congress and there was great enthusiasm all round. In Nehru's own words "this overflowing enthusiasm was for a symbol and an idea." There was "thunder in the air" and the events of 1919 were remembered with all their humiliations and glories. The one-year grace fixed by the Calcutta Congress expired. The Lahore Congress adopted the resolution on Independence and the action to be taken for achieving freedom. The Congress resolved that it was fruitless to participate in the proposed Round Table Conference and the Working Committee was authorised to launch a programme of Civil Disobedience. But every one knew that "the real decision lay with Gandhiji." Befittingly, at the stroke of midnight, on 31 December, 1929, Jawaharlal Nehru hoisted the tri-colour National Flag of India.

In pursuance of the Congress resolution many members resigned from legislature. The 26th of January, 1930, was observed as the *Purna Swaraj* or Independence Day and all over the country the people took the pledge of independence. The Congress Working Committee authorised Gandhiji to start Civil Disobedience, as and when he thought it proper and suitable. As in the days of Non-Co-Operation, India was in the wake of a great movement. Verrier Elwin,

Lahore
Congress
(1929)

Independence Day
observed
(26 January,
1930)

an eye-witness of the age, writes pertinently : " At this time, the national movement of India had risen to a pitch of sincerity and devotion that has rarely been equalled in the political upheavals of the world." The nation in breathless suspense was looking forward to Gandhiji for leadership and guidance.

The historic Civil Disobedience movement was launched by Gandhiji with his famous march to Dandi, a small village on the Gujarat sea-coast, where he decided to make salt in defiance of the Salt Law regulations, more as a symbol of protest. The march began on 12 March, 1930, and Gandhiji and his followers reached Dandi, a distance of about 200 miles from Sabarmati Ashram, on 5 April. The march had raised public feelings to a fever heat and all eyes were focussed on its daily progress. On the morning of 6 April, 1930, Gandhiji violated the Salt Laws which signalled the beginning of countrywide waves of Civil Disobedience. Violation of laws, non-payment of taxes, boycott of foreign goods and clothes, mass strikes and demonstrations shook the whole country. The no-tax campaign in U.P. was a salient feature of the movement. Thousands of women came out to offer Civil Disobedience in response to Gandhiji's stirring appeal. The then Home Secretary to the Government of India confessed to Verrier Elwin that " nothing had disturbed him more than the great awakening among Indian women and the part that they had begun to play in politics." The movement meanwhile reached the Frontier Province where Abdul Ghaffar Khan, popularly known as 'the Frontier Gandhi', started an organisation of non-violent Pathan warriors, named " Khudai Khidmatgars " (Servants

Dandi
march :
Violation of
Salt Laws
(March-
April
1930)

Civil Dis-
obedience
begins

of God). From their uniforms they became known as the Red Shirts. Abdul Ghaffar Khan urged his warrior followers to be non-violent, disciplined and devoted to the cause of freedom. The Red Shirts became a part of the Congress organisation.

The Civil Disobedience movement soon reached a dimension that upset even the Government's anticipation. A virtual reign of terror and repression was let loose. Repressive laws, mass arrests, torture, firings, *lathi* charges and police excesses became common occurrences. The leaders, including Gandhiji, were arrested. The heroism of the *Satyagrahis* and the answering brutality of the police reached their climax when the former raided the salt depot of Dharsana in the Surat district.

The Simon Commission Report was published in the middle of the Civil Disobedience movement. Its recommendations were found completely unsatisfactory to the nationalists. Soon after, the British Government summoned the ~~proposed Round Table Conference~~ in London.

The First Round Table Conference was held from 12 November, 1930 to 19 January, 1931. The Congress did not participate. There were representatives of the British political parties, delegates from the Indian States, from the Liberals, the Muslim League, the Depressed Classes, the Sikhs and other groups. Among the prominent Indian participants were Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Mr. Jayakar, the Right Hon'ble Srinivasa Sastri, Mr. C. Y. Chintamani, Sir Mohammad Shafi, Mr. Jinnah, Maulana Mohammad Ali and others. It was generally agreed in the Conference that British India and the Indian

The
Red-Shirts

Government
repression

The First
Round Table
Conference
(1930-1931)

Muslem
attitude to
Civil Dis-
obedience

States should form a Federal Union. There were prolonged discussions on the frame-work of the constitution. But B. R. Ambedkar, the leader of the Scheduled Castes, raised the question of reserved seats for the 'Depressed Classes'. The Muslim delegates pressed for "adequate safeguards" for the Muslims. Thus, the minority problem once again proved a bogey to any workable agreement. It is important to note that the bulk of the Muslims in India did not have much sympathy for Civil Disobedience. Even Muhammad Ali, once a great admirer and associate of Gandhiji, said in 1930 : "We refuse to join Mr. Gandhi because his movement is not a movement for the complete independence of India but for making the seventy millions of Indian Mussalmans dependents of the Hindu Mahasabha." The Hindu-Muslim brotherhood of the Khilafat—Non-Co-Operation days was now a far cry. Separatism had spread its tentacles far and wide.

In his closing address to the Conference the Prime Minister, Ramsay Macdonald, appealed to the people of India to end Civil Disobedience and co-operate with the Government in working out a constitutional settlement. The Conference was adjourned *sine die*.

The British Government knew fully well that any settlement, concerning India's future, without the Congress co-operation was not a practical proposition. So efforts were made to induce the Congress to change its attitude and participate in the next session of the Round Table Conference. On the Congress side also the earlier rigidity was giving way to a more conciliatory attitude, particularly, in view of the fact that

the Civil Disobedience movement had thawed considerably. The Congress authorised Gandhiji to negotiate a settlement with the Viceroy, Lord Irwin. The outcome of the negotiations was the famous Gandhi-Irwin Pact (March, 1931) which provided for release of political prisoners and suspension of Civil Disobedience. The Congress agreed to participate in the coming second session of the Round Table Conference. The Pact was approved by the Congress in its annual session held in Karachi (March, 1931). Though the execution of Bhagat Singh and two other revolutionaries connected in the Lahore Conspiracy Case and the out-break of communal riots cast inevitably a dark shadow on the more critical and sensitive minds in the Congress Session, the Gandhi-Irwin Pact was hailed as a triumph of the Congress as it was the first occasion when the Viceroy "talked man to man to the Indian leader without pomp, reservations or unreality."

Gandhi-Irwin Pact
(March, 1931)

The Second Round Table Conference met in London in September, 1931. Gandhiji attended the Conference as the sole representative of the Congress. Another notable participant was Sarojini Naidu who was invited to represent Indian womanhood. The Congress was not interested in petty details of the future constitution. It was concerned with the fundamental i.e. granting of Dominion Status—in full and at once. Gandhiji advocated this and emphatically asserted that the Congress was not a mere political party but a national organisation representing millions of Indians belonging to all classes, creeds and religions. Gandhiji's personal charm and catholicity impressed the Conference but he could not achieve any practical

The Second
Round Table
Conference
(1931)

success. This Conference also broke down on the communal question. Its failure, at least to the Congress, was not unexpected. Still it caused depression and a sense of frustration. The national struggle continued. But, as Nehru admits, "it did create an atmosphere somewhat unfavourable to it."

On his return to India towards the end of the year Gandhiji was dismayed to see Government repression in full swing. All the prominent leaders had been arrested. Revolutionary activities had intensified in Bengal, U.P. and the Frontier Provinces. Gandhiji's willingness to have an interview with the new Viceroy, Lord Willingdon who proved intransigent could not materialise. The Civil Disobedience movement was resumed and Gandhiji was arrested on 4 January, 1932. The Congress was declared an illegal body and the Government took the sternest measures to crush the movement. Police action surpassed even its own past records of shame. A grim picture of police atrocities was depicted in the Report of the India League Delegation which made a thorough enquiry into the Civil Disobedience movement.

Civil Disobedience resumed.

The Communal Award (August, 1932)

In August, 1932, Ramsay Macdonald made his 'Communal Award' providing for separate electorates for Muslim, European and Sikh voters. There was to be reservation of seats for women and provision for separate electorates for the Depressed Classes as a separate community. Gandhiji who had been a great crusader against untouchability strongly opposed this scheme of separate electorates for the 'untouchables' —now officially described as Scheduled Castes. He undertook a fast unto death in the Yeravada prison as a protest. Five days later an agreement was

reached in a conference at Poona which considerably amended the Award on this issue. The Poona Pact, as it came to be known, was considered by many as an unfortunate shifting of emphasis from the main object of the Civil Disobedience movement. Gandhiji was now more concerned with the Harijan movement. This had an adverse effect on the Civil Disobedience movement which began to show signs of decay.

Gandhiji's
fast: The
Poona Pact

The Third Round Table Conference met in London in November, 1932, with the Congress holding away. It was attended by a much smaller number of representatives than before. The outcome of the Round Table Conferences and subsequent discussions was the Government of India Bill which became an Act in 1935 in spite of 'diehard' conservative opposition in Britain, led by Winston Churchill.

The Third
Round Table
Conference

The Act established a 'Federation of India' and provided for provincial autonomy with a Government responsible to an elected legislature in every Governor's Province. The powers of the Secretary of State, the Government of India and the Provinces were redistributed between the Central Government and the Provinces. Departments of provincial administration were to be controlled by Ministers responsible to their legislatures. But the Governors were to "act in their discretion" before assenting to Bills and had certain "special responsibilities". Election to the legislatures was to be on the principle of the Communal Award. The Federal Legislature was to be a bi-cameral body. There was to be Dyarchy at the centre. Most of the departments were to be administered on the advice of the ministers, with the Governor-General holding certain "safeguards".

The Govern-
ment of
India Act
(1935)

Defence and foreign affairs were to be controlled by the Governor-General with the assistance of "Counsellors" appointed by himself. The Counsellors were to be responsible only to him. Thus with innumerable checks, restrictions, reservations and safeguards the new Act was still far away from even a reasonable measure of Self-Government. The status of India was still that of a dependency "gradually gravitating towards that of a Dominion."

The Congress
attitude to
the new Act

The new Act of 1935 was in general a disappointment for the Indian political leaders. But whereas others were willing to give it a fair trial, the Congress condemned it as totally disappointing. The Congress attitude was easily understandable in the light of its known standpoint. It was pledged to non-co-operate with anything short of Dominion Status. But from a practical analysis of the political atmosphere and the state of the Civil Disobedience movement the Congress found itself in a none-too-happy situation. The Civil Disobedience was still being continued but it had lost its earlier fire, appeal and enthusiasm. As Nehru describes it, "the initial push of inspiration was far less than in 1930. It was as if we entered unwillingly to battle. There was a glory about it in 1930 which had faded a little two years later." Moreover, the mainspring of the movement Gandhiji, now very much preoccupied with the Harijan problem, favoured suspension of the Civil Disobedience movement. Thus gradually, in spite of occasional sparks and flashes, the movement slowly petered out before it was officially called off by Gandhiji in May, 1933. The disappointment caused in many quarters was understandable and among those who became critical

Civil Dis-
obedience
fades out

of Gandhiji's policy and leadership was Subhas Chandra Bose, then a prominent leader of the Congress Left wing. The Civil Disobedience movement was, however, memorable for the part played by the women, the youth, the students and the masses. The rural masses, affected by industrial and agricultural slump, had turned to the Civil Disobedience movement. To them it was a struggle against an oppressive land system. This mass participation lent the Congress a new status and prestige. The Congress hold on the masses was proved beyond doubt. The flames of the movement died down but the "burning embers" remained "for a long time hot and unquenchable as India's will to freedom."

Significance
of the
movement

Revolutionary Activities :

The Government policy of repression had largely succeeded in curbing revolutionary activities. Moreover, with the beginning of the Non-co-operation movement the attention of all nationalists was focussed on the progress of this mighty upsurge. But the suspension of Non-co-operation was marked by the revival of revolutionary activities. News-papers, journals and leaflets extolling revolutionary activities began to appear. The *Anushilan* and the *Yugantar* group again became active. A conference of revolutionaries was held in Lucknow in October, 1924, and its outcome was an all-India organisation named Hindusthan Republican Association. Its object was "to establish a federated Republic of the United States of India by an organised and armed revolution." One of the most daring acts of this group led by Ramprasad Bismil was a dacoity in a railway train proceeding from Kakori towards Alamnagar, on

Revival of
revolutionary
activities

Hindusthan
Republican
Association

Kakori
Conspiracy
Case (1925)

9 August, 1925. The police succeeded in discovering the plot and arresting the suspects and a case was instituted which became famous as the Kakori Conspiracy Case. Some of the leaders received death sentences, others long terms of imprisonment.

Meerut
Conspiracy
Case (1929-
1933)

After the Russian Revolution Communist ideas began to influence a small section of nationalists in India. Attempts were made by M. N. Roy and others to organise a Communist Party in India. There was growing industrial unrest. As Trade Unions were formed, socialistic tendencies could be noticed. The Government was alarmed and in September, 1928, a Public Safety Bill was introduced in the Legislative Assembly. About the same time was formed the Workers' and Peasants' Party in the United Provinces. Its inaugural conference was held in Meerut (October, 1928). But in March, 1929, the Government arrested thirty one leftists, including three Englishmen, on a charge of conspiracy against the King. The arrested persons were put in Meerut jail and the trial instituted became known as the Meerut Conspiracy Case. The trial continued for four years and most of the accused received long-term sentences. The Meerut Conspiracy Case greatly helped in drawing the people's minds to the fascinating but then little-understood doctrines of socialism or communism.

After the Kakori Conspiracy Case, the police had taken the sternest possible measures to round up all revolutionaries and their associates. These had a dampening effect on revolutionary activities. Chandra Sekhar Azad, an absconder of the Kakori Conspiracy Case, now took the initiative in reorganising the revolutionaries. The Hindusthan Republican Asso-

ciation was renamed as the Hindusthan Socialist Republican Association which signified its object of creating a socialist state in India. Their activities were now sought to be linked up with the prevailing labour unrest in the big cities and the influence of the Russian Revolution was more clearly evident. Saunders, a police officer of Lahore, was shot dead on 17 November, 1938, by Bhagat Singh. On 8 April, 1929, Bhagat Singh and Batukeswar Datta, both members of the Association, threw two bombs on the floor of the Legislative Assembly at Delhi from the public gallery, while the Public Safety Bill was being discussed. Both of them made no attempt to escape as they wanted to draw public attention to the aims and objectives of the reevolutionaries and did not want innocents to suffer for their action. In a joint statement they explained that the bombs were dropped on the Assembly floor "to register our protest on behalf of those who had no other means left to give expression to their heart-rending agony. Our sole purpose was 'to make the deaf hear' and give the heedless a timely warning."

Bhagat
Singh and
Batukeswar
Datta :
Assembly
Bomb
Throwing
Case (1929)

Shortly after the bomb-throwing incident the police discovered a bomb factory at Lahore and another at Saharanpore. Many members of the Association were arrested and the famous Lahore Conspiracy Case was instituted against the revolutionaries in 1929. Bhagat Singh was an accused in this case also. In course of the trial, under-trial prisoners started a hunger strike to protest against the treatment received in jail. They also claimed to be treated as war-prisoners and not as ordinary criminals because they were charged with waging war against the King.

Lahore
Conspiracy
Case (1929)

Martyrdom
of Jatin Das

The fast created great public excitement. Ultimately, all the prisoners gave up the fast excepting Jatin Das who stood firm in his principle to the last and died after 64 days' fast on 13 September, 1929. Jatin Das who, when visited by Nehru in the jail, looked "soft and gentle like a young girl" had moved the people to the very depth of their hearts and had set a unique example of devotion and determination. The Lahore Conspiracy Case ended in the death sentence of Bhagat Singh and two others and long-term imprisonment for many of the accused.

Chandra
Sekhar
Azad

Revolutionary activities in northern India decreased with the arrest and conviction of the leaders of the Hindusthan Socialist Republican Association. But a handful of revolutionaries led by Chandra Sekhar Azad continued their activities which caused the Government much alarm and headache. Ultimately Chandra Sekhar was killed in a skirmish with the police at Allahabad in 1931. With his death the most eventful years of revolutionary activities in northern India practically came to an end.

Chittagong
Armoury
Raid
(18 April,
1930)

While the daring exploits of the revolutionaries set all northern India agog, there was also a boisterous revival of similar activities in Bengal. The most spectacular and daring was the raid on the Government armouries at Chittagong led by Surya Sen, popularly known as Master-da. The Chittagong Armoury raid was followed by a series of revolutionary incidents in the district. The news of the raid had great influence on young revolutionaries and terrorist activities intensified in various parts of the country. The government took the most stringent measures to curb these revolutionary activities.

Binoy, Badal and Dinesh, three young men, raided the Writers' Buildings, Calcutta on 8 December, 1930, and assassinated the Inspector-General of Prisons and injured some other European officials. Binoy and Badal committed suicide to evade arrest and Dinesh who also made a similar unsuccessful attempt, was later hanged. Attempts on the lives of unpopular government officials and police officers continued to take place in various districts of the province.

Binoy-
Badal-
Dinesh

The Chittagong Armoury Raid Case ended in 1932 and fourteen of the accused received transportation for life. But Surya Sen and four of his associates who had avoided arrest continued their activities. On 22 September, 1932, a group of revolutionaries led by a young girl Pritilata Waddedar raided the Railway Institute at Pahartali in Chittagong. During the raid Pritilata was seriously injured and she committed suicide to evade arrest. Surya Sen was arrested in February, 1933, through an act of treachery and was hanged after trial. In the thirties, sporadic revolutionary activities continued in Bengal, U.P., the Punjab, Delhi, Bombay, Central Provinces, Rajputana, Madras and other places.

Sporadic
revolutionary
activities

The revolutionaries did not believe in the principle of non-violence. Bhagat Singh and Batukeswar Datta in their joint statement said : "Elimination of force at all costs is utopian and the new movement which had arisen in the country and of which we have given a warning is inspired by the ideals which guided Guru Govind Singh and Shivaji, Kamal Pasha and Riza Khan, Washington and Garibaldi, Lafayette and Lenin." The revolutionaries' object was to overthrow the British rule and set up a republic.

Object of
the Revolutionaries.

lican government in India based on socialistic principles. Their objectives and plan of operation differed fundamentally from the general trend of the national movement led by the Congress. But their patriotism, devotion and sacrifice earned the admiration of the nation. The constitutional reforms introduced by the Act of 1935, as Dr. R. C. Majumdar rightly observes, "took away the edge of both the violent and non-violent methods in Indian politics." It was not till the Quit India movement that there was recrudescence of revolutionary activities in India.

CHAPTER VI

THE FINAL STRIDES TO FREEDOM

The Congress Ministries :

With the fading-out of the Civil Disobedience movement and its ultimate calling-off, many Congressmen began to consider the practicability of working along the lines of the now-defunct Swarajya Party. Accordingly, the Congress decided to contest the coming elections to be held under the new Act of 1935. Jawaharlal Nehru considered the new Act "a new charter of slavery." He was in favour of contesting the elections but not of taking part in any Provincial Government. This proved to be an impractical proposition. It was decided with the consent of Gandhiji that the Congress would fight the elections on the issue of repealing all repressive laws and rejection of the new Act in favour of the National Demands raised by Gandhiji in the Round Table Conference. A Parliamentary Board was set up by the Congress to deal with matters concerning the elections.

The Congress and the Act of 1935.

A salient feature of the Congress during the last few years was the steady growth of the Congress Left wing led by Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose. The former did not always agree with Gandhiji and at times was seriously critical of the latter's statements and policies. Nevertheless Jawaharlal Nehru remained loyal through a sense of personal attachment to the magic personality of Gandhiji. But

Growth of Congress Left wing

Subhas Bose was more aggressive and outspoken in his views. He soon began to lose his faith in Gandhian leadership and chalked out a different line of action for the attainment of the common goal of freedom. In 1936 Jawaharlal Nehru presided over the annual Congress session held at Faizpur. The session atmosphere was "surcharged with socialist slogans, emphasising the rights of workers and peasants on the one hand and declaiming against the forces of Imperialism and Fascism on the other." The session was a landmark in the evolution of socialistic ideas and programmes of the Congress.

In the election held in 1937, the Congress swept the polls so far as the General or predominantly Hindu seats were concerned. Congress ministries were formed in seven out of the eleven provinces. The Muslim League had obtained a large number of seats reserved for the Muslims. The Muslim League's offer to form coalition ministries in the provinces was turned down by the Congress as it did not want to admit any one in the ministry who would not fully subscribe to Congress objectives and policies. The rejection sought to vindicate the Congress stand that it was a national body and all minorities' interest was well protected under its auspices. The Congress rejection, however idealistic it might be, widened the gulf between the two parties. This was utilised to fan the smouldering embers of communalism. Jinnah publicly proclaimed that the Congress had done nothing for the Muslims. "From the classes" he now "went to masses with the cry of Islam in danger." The League continued to press the claim that the Muslim League and the Congress were the organisations of

Congress
rejects
Muslim
League
offer of
Coalition
Ministry

the Muslims and the Hindus respectively. The popularity of the League and its hold on the masses went on increasing. The Congress with its principles of secularism and national solidarity could neither accept nor ignore the new situation.

The Congress ministries proved successful and popular. Their programmes of primary education, prohibition, rural reconstruction, uplift of the Harijans etc. achieved considerable success. It also helped the Congress to come into wider contact with the masses which added indeed, to its power and popularity. But the achievements were not ends in themselves. The whole country showed signs of peasants' movement, industrial unrest and general discontent. The more radical trend in the Congress was reflected in the election of Subhas Bose as the President of the Haripura Congress in 1938. Clouds of the impending Second World War were now looming large. The Congress condemned all war preparations and resolved that "India can be no party to such an imperialist war." Subhas Bose differed fundamentally from Gandhiji on the vital issues viz., the future course of the national movement, industrialisation and India's attitude towards the British Government during the coming world war. Subhas Bose's election as the President of the Tripuri Congress session in March, 1939, was viewed by Gandhiji as his personal defeat. The Tripuri Congress adopted resolutions reiterating the goal of independence and the rejection of the Federal part of the Act of 1935. It demanded "a constitution for a Free India through a Constituent Assembly, elected by the people on the basis of the adult franchise and without any interference by a

Signs of discord :
Haripura
(1838) and
Tripuri
Congress
(1939)

foreign authority." The Congress condemned the imperialist British foreign policy as well as Fascism in clear terms.

But Gandhiji's leadership and advice were still considered essential for the Congress and the national movement. A breakaway from Gandhian policy and programme was impossible, if not unthinkable, for the Congress. Consequently, the differences between Gandhiji and Subhas Bose led to the latter's resignation from the Presidentship. He now formed a new party—the Forward Bloc. In the words of its founder, the Forward Bloc was intended to be "a radical and progressive party within the Congress, with a view to rallying the entire Left wing under one banner." But the differences were so deep-rooted and fundamental that very soon the Forward Bloc became a separate independent party.

Forward
Bloc
founded by
Bose

Spread of
the national
movement
in the
princely
States

A significant new development during these years was the spread of the national movement in the Indian princely States or the 'Native States'. In 1937, there was widespread unrest in Mysore against the State Government's policy of repression. The Congress expressed its sympathy for the movement. In 1938, the Congress made it clear that Independence must be for the whole of India, including the princely States. Agitations in the States spread rapidly and some of the Rulers had to concede certain demands of their people. Individual Congressmen carried out and promoted Civil Disobedience in some of the States. In 1939, Jawaharlal Nehru became the President of the All-India States' Peoples' Conference. State Congress organisations were set up though they were not directly under the National Congress. Such agi-

tations led to at least some liberalisation of the administration in the States. But more important was the general awakening and the new spirit of unity among the people of the princely States.

National Movement and the Second World War :

When the Second World War broke out, the Congress attitude was one of sympathy for the British though the Congress refused co-operation. Both Gandhiji and Jawaharlal Nehru were in favour of supporting the British Government, for it seemed to be a question of struggle between Fascism and Democracy. Gandhiji wrote in the *Harijan* that his "sympathies were with England and France from the purely humanitarian standpoint." The Congress policy was that no co-operation was possible unless the British Government made clear their war aims "in regard to democracy and imperialism and the new order that is envisaged." The Congress demanded that "India must be declared an independent nation, and present application must be given to this status to the largest possible extent." Subhas Bose was opposed to co-operation with the British Government as he believed that "only after the defeat and break-up of the British Empire could India hope to be free." To him the British Empire in peril offered a real rare opportunity to the Indians to achieve freedom.

The British Government did not make any candid declaration on its policy and the future of India as demanded by the Congress. Consequently, all the Congress ministries resigned by the end of 1939 according to Congress directive. In its annual session held at Ramgarh in March, 1940, the Congress reaffirmed

The Congress
attitude
to the
Second
World War

Congress
plea for a
National
Government

its demand for complete independence. But with the alarming runaway victories of the Germans, the Congress modified its earlier demand and offered to co-operate with the Government, if only a Provisional National Government was set up at the centre. This offer was made at the instance of C. Rajagopalachari. Gandhiji was willing to offer co-operation and wrote : "We do not seek independence out of Britain's ruin." Jawaharlal Nehru said, "India is completely opposed to the idea of the triumph of Nazism." The Government's reply to the Congress offer of co-operation came in the form of a statement by the Viceroy Lord Linlithgow on 8 August, 1940. The proposal to set up a Provisional National Government was turned down as the British Government "could not contemplate the transfer of their present responsibilities for the peace and welfare of India to any system of Government whose authority is directly denied by large and powerful elements in India's life." The Viceroy offered to set up, after the war, a representative body to devise a new constitution for India, to enlarge the Viceroy's Executive Council with additional Indian members and to appoint a War Advisory Council with representatives of British India and the Indian States.

The
"August
Offer"
(8 August,
1940)

This "August Offer", as it came to be known, was totally unacceptable to the Congress. The Government attitude to the minority problem particularly offended the Congress. Nehru wrote : "It is the old language of imperialism and the content has changed in no way." In October, 1940, the Congress started an individual Civil Disobedience campaign. One of the first to offer individual *Satyagraha* was Acharya Vinoba Bhave, specially selected by Gandhiji.

The deadlock continued for a long time. Then the course of the war took a turn for the worse with Japan joining the Axis camp in December, 1941. The fall of Singapore and Malaya and the rapid advance of the Japanese forces in Burma posed a serious threat to the security of India. The Congress again expressed its willingness to co-operate with the British Government on condition that India be granted full independence. "The country wanted freedom before victory, the Government victory before freedom" is a terse comment on the situation.

When the World War broke out the Muslim League, while sympathising with the British, refused to offer its support unless it was recognised as the only representative organisation of the Muslims. It also asked for an assurance that no constitution be framed without the consent and approval of the League. In the early years of the war, the League remained firm in its attitude of non-co-operation with the Government. The August Offer, though not completely satisfactory to the League, allayed their fears of a Congress Raj in India. The League proclaimed that partition of India was the only solution. It was ready to offer co-operation on the acceptance of the 'two-nation' theory. The gulf between the League and the Congress had widened beyond any possibility of rapprochement.

For quite some time a section of the Muslim intelligentsia was nourishing the idea of a separate independent Muslim State in India. It was first voiced by Mohammad Iqbal (1876—1938), the well-known poet, in 1930, when he said, "Muslims demand for the creation of a Muslim India within India."

The Muslim attitude
Origin of the idea of Pakistan

The idea of a separate Muslim State in a new form, was elaborated by a group of young Muslim students in England at the time of the Round Table Conference. One of them, Rahmat Ali, conveyed to the Muslim delegates to the Round Table Conference the scheme of a separate Muslim homeland consisting of the Punjab, North-West Frontier or Afghan Province, Kashmir, Sind and Baluchistan. The proposed separate Muslim State was to be named PAKISTAN (Sacred land).^{*} The name was derived by taking the first letter of the first four provinces and the end of the last named province. The idea did not even receive a serious consideration from the delegates to the Round Table Conference. But Rahmat Ali founded the Pakistan National Movement in 1933 to propagate the idea. The effort received little attention at that time. Even the Muslim leaders dismissed it as "only a students' scheme" and as "chimerical and impracticable."

The League
takes up
the cause of
Pakistan

But the scheme of a separate Muslim State continued to live and gain ground. This was facilitated by the growing differences between the League and the Congress. Finally Jinnah came to sponsor the two-nation theory and took up the cause in right earnest. When the Congress ministries resigned, Jinnah was overwhelmed with joy and the League observed "a day of deliverance and thanksgiving." In March, 1940, the Muslim League declared that the Muslims in India must have a separate independent state. The Muslim League by and large succeeded in creating an apprehension among the Muslims of the so-called dangers of a Congress Gov-

^{*} Originally Pakstan.

ernment at the Centre and made the Muslim public opinion veer round it. No amount of Congress appeals and policy statements could allay their deep-rooted fear and distrust of a Hindu-dominated Congress rule. The League, it was now evident, would not be satisfied with anything but the formation of the Pakistan as a State of which "Ahmad was the philosopher, Iqbal the prophet and Jinnah the statesman-creator."

During the period of negotiations for Indian co-operation the Muslim League remained firm in its demand for Pakistan. This provided the British Government with a good ground to turn down the Congress proposal of a Provisional National Government. But the fall of Rangoon on 8 March, 1942, necessitated another effort to reach an agreement. The British Government decided to send Sir Stafford Cripps, a member of the British Cabinet, to India to survey the situation and find out a solution after consultations with the Indian leaders.

After a week of hectic activities and prolonged discussions, Cripps announced his proposals in the form of a Draft Declaration (29 March, 1942). The aim of the British Government was declared as "the earliest possible realisation of self-government in India." India was promised Dominion Status with the power to secede from the British Commonwealth. A constitution-making body was to be set up immediately after the war was over. The Declaration implicitly suggested a partition of India in the long run in case the new constitution was found unacceptable by any Province or Provinces. The Cripps' proposals were rejected by both the League and the

Cripps' Declaration
(March, 1942)

The League
and the
Congress
reject
Cripps'
proposals

Congress. The League wished to see forthwith the outright formation of Pakistan. The Congress would not be satisfied with mere promises for the future. Gandhiji is said to have described the British offer as a "post-dated cheque on a failing bank." Negotiations for an interim agreement failed. It was widely known that President Franklin D. Roosevelt had a hand behind the decision to send the Cripps' mission. But even the good offices of Col. Louis Johnson, the personal representative of the U.S. President, was of no avail. In a personal letter to President Roosevelt Jawaharlal Nehru wrote on 12 April, 1942 : "The failure of Sir Stafford Cripps' mission to bring about a settlement between the British Government and the Indian people must have distressed you, as it has distressed us. As you know, we have struggled for long years for the independence of India, but the peril of to-day made us desire above everything else that an opportunity should be given to us to organise a real national and popular resistance to the aggressor and invader. We were convinced that the right way to do this would have been to give freedom and independence to our people and ask them to defend it. That would have lighted a spark in millions of hearts, which would have developed into a blazing fire of resistance which no aggressor could have faced successfully..... Unfortunately even that (formation of a truly national Government) was not considered feasible or desirable by the British Government. Our sympathies, as we have often declared, are with the forces fighting against fascism and for democracy and freedom ; with freedom in our own country, those sympathies could have been translated into dynamic action." It is no

Nehru's
letter to
President
Roosevelt

wonder that the Conservative Cabinet of Winston Churchill found it difficult to accept or appreciate the Congress view-point.

Quit India Movement :

With the failure of the Cripps' mission hopes of a Congress-British Government understanding and co-operation disappeared. The Congress still adhered to its policy of resistance to any possible Japanese aggression on India. Gandhiji now contemplated an all-out campaign to compel British withdrawal from India. His view was that "the presence of the British in India is an invitation to Japan to invade India. Their withdrawal removes the bait." Gandhiji wrote, "Leave India in God's hands, or in modern parlance, to anarchy. Then all parties will fight one another like dogs or will, when real responsibility faces them, come to a reasonable agreement." Most of the Congress leaders, in spite of their initial doubts, agreed to Gandhiji's new policy and plan of campaign. Only Rajagopalachari, who was in favour of the Cripps' plan and the acceptance of the principle of Pakistan, strongly opposed Gandhiji's new policy. Immediate British withdrawal, Rajagopalachari feared, would leave India to the mercy of Japanese aggression. He with a few followers resigned from the Congress.

On 14 July, 1942, the Congress Working Committee adopted a resolution demanding immediate end of the British rule in India. This became famous as the 'Quit India' resolution. Ending of the British rule, the resolution said, was "necessary not only in the interest of India but also for the safety of the

The Congress
adopts
the 'Quit
India' re-
solution

world and for the ending of Nazism, Fascism, militarism and other forms of imperialism, and the aggression of one nation against another." The resolution proposed to set up a Provisional Government and to convene a Constituent Assembly to draft a constitution for India after the withdrawal of the British. It also made clear that the Congress had no desire to embarrass Great Britain or the Allies and had no sympathy for the aggressive designs of the Axis group. The Congress was even "agreeable to the stationing of the armed forces of the Allies in India, should they so desire, in order to ward off and resist Japanese or other aggression." In case of the demand being rejected by the British Government, the Congress would be "reluctantly compelled to utilise all the non-violent strength it might have gathered since 1920, when it adopted Non-Violence as part of its policy for the vindication of political rights and liberty. Such a widespread struggle would inevitably be under the leadership of Gandhiji."

The British Government viewed any such idea and plan of campaign as rebellion. Naturally the Viceroy took a very grim view of the Quit India resolution. He refused to even discuss the issue with the Congress. The A.I.C.C. met on 7 August, 1942, and the next day, after prolonged discussions, passed a resolution deciding to start "a mass struggle on non-violent lines on the widest possible scale under the leadership of Gandhiji." The Congress made a passionate appeal to all Indian nationalists to join the movement for the independence of their motherland. Gandhiji in his address proclaimed, "I am not going to be satisfied with anything short of complete

freedom.... We shall do or die. We shall either free India or die in the attempt."

The iron hand of the government came down very swiftly. On the morning of 9 August, Gandhiji and other Congress leaders were arrested. The Congress was declared illegal. The news of the leaders' arrest marked the beginning of a wide-spread movement in India. It was hardly possible for such a movement to remain peaceful. Even Gandhiji himself was well aware of that. But the arrest of all the notable Congress leaders virtually left the movement in the hands of the masses. Naturally the movement took the form of a violent out-break. This included cutting of telegraph and telephone wires, damaging railway lines, raising barricades in cities and towns and other forms of violent demonstrations. The students, as in the past, played an important part in the '42 movement. Besides Congressmen, revolutionaries also were very active in the movement. The Congress Socialist group also played a prominent part. Notable among them were Jayaprakash Narain and Aruna Asaf Ali. The Government made a determined bid to ~~crush the~~ movement as quickly as possible. Besides normal repressive measures, recourse was taken to machine gun and aerial firing. This only increased the people's fury and led to more violent and wider disturbances. In some places like Midnapore in West Bengal and Ballia in U.P., even 'parallel governments' were set up by the people. But ultimately, the Government succeeded in bringing the situation under its control and the movement lost much of its force. The absence of wise leadership was keenly felt. Gandhiji, Jawaharlal Nehru and

Arrest of
leaders and
beginning
of the
movement

Significance
of the
movement

other Congress leaders did not approve this out-break of violence. The Muslim League, the Communists and the Depressed Classes denounced the movement. Meanwhile, the League continued to press on its demand for Pakistan. The wisdom of starting the Quit India movement was questioned by many. Yet the movement revealed the people's fighting spirit, their desperate longing for freedom. It once again proved the hold of the Congress on the masses. It also served as an eye-opener to the British Government about India's attitude to British imperialism in India.

The Struggle Outside India :

Bose escapes
to Germany

While the whole nation was in ferment in the memorable '42, the struggle for independence was carried on by Subhas Bose outside India. His difference with Gandhiji and ultimate break off with the Congress have already been described. The out-break of the Second World War was considered by Subhas Bose as a golden opportunity to wage war against the continuance of British rule. In July, 1940, he was arrested. After a few months he was released on grounds of ill health but was practically interned in his residence in Calcutta. He successfully eluded the police vigilance and escaped out of India to reach Berlin in March, 1941. This dramatic escape and his astounding journey across several countries has now become a legend. Subhas Bose sought to secure German help and promise for India's independence. There he worked to raise an Indian legion. He was hailed by the Indian community in Germany as *Netaji* and was greeted with the slogan "*Jai Hind.*" From Berlin Radio he regularly broadcasted to India urging

his countrymen to rise against the British. But he soon felt that South-East Asia would be a more suitable ground for his grand scheme of raising a national army to free India from the British yoke. Soon came the opportunity he was eagerly looking forward to.

During the war many Indian revolutionaries abroad had founded organisations with the object of helping the end of British rule in India. One such notable organisation was the Indian Independence League founded by Rash Bihari Bose in Japan. This organisation was the outcome of two Conferences—the first one held in Tokyo (March, 1942) and the second in Bangkok (June, 1942). The revolutionaries assembled in the Conferences decided to form an Indian National Army (*Azad Hind Fouz*) for the liberation of India from British subjection. The army was to be raised with Indians in the South-East Asian countries and Indian soldiers of the British Army captured by the Japanese. Capt. Mohan Singh was primarily responsible for raising the army. In response to an invitation from the Bangkok Conference, Subhas Bose came over from Germany to Tokyo in June, 1943, after a most amazing sea journey fraught with grave danger. He held discussions with the Japanese authorities in course of which the latter promised the independence of India after the war. He then went to Singapore and took over the leadership of the Indian National Army amidst great jubilation and enthusiasm. He became the *Netaji*, the supreme leader of the *Azad Hind Fouz*, and gave the famous war cry : ' *Chalo Delhi* ' (on to Delhi). He worked out a master plan of campaign for the I.N.A. with the ultimate goal of reaching Delhi. A provi-

Indian revolutionaries in Japan

Bose in Japan

The I.N.A. Campaign

sional Government of *Azad Hind* (Free India) was set up. Its object was "to launch and to conduct the struggle that will bring about the expulsion of the British and of their allies from the soil of India." It called upon the Indian people "to strike for India's freedom," and "to launch the final struggle against the British and all their allies in India and to prosecute that struggle with valour and perseverance and with full faith in final victory until the enemy is expelled from Indian soil and the Indian people are once again a free nation." The I.N.A. revealed Subhas Bose's greatness as a military leader and organiser. One of the I.N.A. Brigades advanced with the Japanese army upto the frontiers of India. The Indian national flag was hoisted in Kohima in March, 1944. But with the change of fortune in the war and the retreat and defeat of the Japanese the I.N.A. collapsed. There were not a few Indian nationalists who disagreed at the time with Subhas Bose's ideas and plan of collaboration with the Axis group. Yet the patriotism of Subhas Bose was unquestioned. His grand scheme of India's liberation and the idealism of the I.N.A. movement inspired the people in an unprecedented manner. The Azad Hind movement is thus a milestone in the history of the Indian struggle for independence.

Collapse of
the I.N.A.

In October 1943, the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, was succeeded by Lord Wavell. The war had now swung in favour of the Allies. The change in the Indian and the international situation necessitated a change in the Congress policy. The British Government also showed its willingness to reach a settlement. Gandhiji was released in May, 1944. It was, how-

ever, plainly evident that no solution of the Indian problem was possible without the concurrence of the Muslim League. Gandhiji was very keen on coming to an understanding with Jinnah. The two leaders met in Bombay and held discussions for a fortnight. Gandhiji even offered to accept the principle of Pakistan and urged the Muslim League to join hands with the Congress in demanding immediate independence. He pleaded for a Congress-League Provisional Government during the period of transition. But Jinnah, adamant as ever, turned down the proposals. He also made it clear that partition must come before freedom. Another attempt to draft an agreed constitution for India was made by a Conciliation Committee, headed by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru. But this also proved abortive. The deadlock continued. Apparently the initiative for breaking it now lay with the British Government.

Failure of
Gandhi-
Jinnah Talks

In March 1945, Lord Wavell went to London to consult the British Cabinet. True to general expectations he came back with a plan which was announced on 14 June, 1945. The statement referred to the Government's eagerness to break the "political deadlock in India." The Cripps' offer of 1942, it stated, "stands in its entirety without change or qualification."

The Wavell
Plan
(14 June,
1945)

It further proposed that the Central Executive Council would be reconstituted and it should have "a balanced representation of the main communities, including equal proportion of Moslems and Caste Hindus." Excepting the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief, it would be an exclusively Indian Council. The new Council will carry on the Government

"until a new permanent constitution could be agreed upon and come to force." On the proposals, the Secretary of State, Mr. Amery, said, "We are placing India's immediate future in Indian hands."

Simla
Conference
(June, 1945)

Lord Wavell summoned a conference of Indian political leaders at Simla on 25 June, 1945 to discuss the new proposals. But the conference broke down on the issue of the reconstitution of the Viceroy's Council. Jinnah obstinately demanded that all the Muslim members of the Council must be members of the Muslim League. Such a proposition was totally unacceptable to the Congress which insisted on its national character. Significantly, the chief spokesman of the Congress in the conference was Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. He firmly declared that the Congress "cannot possibly be a party to any arrangement, howsoever temporary it may be, that prejudices its national character, tends to impair the growth of nationalism, and reduces Congress directly or indirectly to a communal body." The Viceroy came in for criticism for allowing Jinnah to wreck the new proposals. But the British viewpoint, as summed up by Coupland, was that "it cannot *impose*, but it could, at need, *propose* a settlement."

The Labour
Ministry :
Changed
policy

In the British General Election of 1945 the Labour Party was voted to power. The new Prime Minister, Mr. Clement Attlee, and the Secretary of State, Lord Pethick Lawrence, were keen on granting independence to India at an early date. The Labour Government had genuine sympathy for Indian aspiration. Besides that there were other influencing factors. Post-war Britain's military power and her economy were in a ruinous condition. The explosive

Indian situation and the inevitable end of the Empire in the near future were also weighty considerations. After a brief visit to London for consultations, Lord Wavell made a new policy broadcast on 19 September, 1945. He announced that elections to the central and provincial legislatures would be held in the coming winter and responsible ministries would be formed in the provinces. A constitution-making body would be convened as soon as possible. The Viceroy would, after the elections, discuss the form of the constitution-making body with the representatives of the major parties and of the Indian States.

The Government intended, as the Viceroy announced, to bring into being an Executive Council, soon after the provincial elections, "which will have the support of the main Indian parties." He appealed for Indian co-operation and help in the "early realisation of full self-government in India."

The Congress and the Muslim League began to make hectic preparations for the coming elections. In the midst of these the Government instituted a public trial of the *Azad Hind Fouz* soldiers on charges of treason. The trial only helped to rouse the people's patriotic emotion to fever-heat. Till now they knew very little of the I.N.A. movement and organisation. The exploits of the I.N.A., led by *Netaji*, stirred the whole nation and the country was thrilled with excitement. The Congress took up the defence of the I.N.A. leaders on trial and set up a panel of lawyers which included Jawaharlal Nehru and Bhulabhai Desai. The I.N.A. leaders were convicted. But their sentences were soon remitted and ultimately they were set free.

I.N.A. Trial

Cabinet
Mission

In the elections to the Central Assembly and the Provincial Legislatures the Muslim League won most of the Muslim seats and the Congress the General seats. On 18 February, 1946, ratings of the Royal Indian Navy revolted. This was possibly influenced by the I.N.A. movement and its popular patriotic strength. The situation tended to take a serious turn before it ended a few days later, mainly owing to the efforts of Vallabhbhai Patel. On 19 February, 1946, Mr. Clement Attlee announced in the House of Commons the decision to send a special mission to India. It was to consist of three British Cabinet Members, viz. Lord Pethick Lawrence, Secretary of State for India, Sir Stafford Cripps, President of the Board of Trade and A. V. Alexander, First Lord of the Admiralty. The Cabinet Mission, as it came to be called, was to seek an agreement on the constitutional issue with the Indian political leaders.

Cabinet
Mission
Plan

The announcement was widely welcomed in India. By now it was quite clear that Indian independence was only a question of time and finalisation of details. The Cabinet Mission arrived in March, 1945. The members held extensive discussions in conjunction with the Viceroy, with the Congress, the League and other Indian bodies. But no agreed settlement on the constitutional issue could be reached. The League, however, stood firm in its demand for Pakistan while the Congress vigorously opposed the 'two-nation' theory. Jinnah was even opposed to the formation of Pakistan, consisting of the areas demanded by him, if it was to be a separate federation of the Indian Union. In the absence of an agreed solution, the Cabinet Mission announced its own recommendations on

16 May, 1946. The main principles of the recommendations were that Indian unity was to be retained while giving concessions to the Muslim demand. This was to be achieved by granting regional autonomy.

It recommended a Federal Union to which the Indian princely States could accede later. There was to be a division of federal and provincial powers. There was provision for subordinate unions between individual provinces. Each Province had the right to opt out of the Federal Union after the first election of its Legislative Council under the new constitution. An Interim National Government was to be set up till a new constitution could be drawn up by a Constituent Assembly. The Constituent Assembly would consist of members to be elected on a communal basis by the provincial Legislative Assemblies, and the representatives of the princely States which would join the Union.

Both the Muslim League and the Congress found it difficult to either accept or reject the ingenious Cabinet Mission plan in its entirety. The Muslim League, while accepting the plan, reasserted its goal of sovereign Pakistan. The Congress disagreed with the principle of determining the number of members and with the basis of representation in the Interim Government. On this issue the Congress rejected the proposal for an Interim Government, though it agreed to participating in the Constituent Assembly in order to draft the Constitution. The Muslim League now urged on the Viceroy to proceed with the plan of an Interim Government. But the Viceroy refused to do so in the absence of Congress participation in the Interim Government. The Viceroy intended the

The Congress and the League response to the Cabinet Mission Plan

Interim Government to be formed by both the League and the Congress representatives. He made a renewed offer to both the parties to form an Interim Government. The League and the Congress widely differed on their interpretation of the Cabinet Mission Plan. The Muslim League now formally withdrew its acceptance of the Cabinet Mission Plan.

The Muslim League observes "Direct Action Day" (16 August, 1946)

On the refusal of the Muslim League to join the Interim Government the Viceroy invited Jawaharlal Nehru—the President of the Congress, to form the Interim Government. The Viceroy's offer was accepted by the Congress Working Committee. The Muslim League was enraged. It decided to observe 16 August, 1946, as "Direct Action Day" to give expression to its wounded feelings and for the achievement of the goal of Pakistan. The day passed off without much untoward incident in most parts of the country. But in Calcutta it witnessed a most shocking out-burst of communal frenzy. The city and suburbs had a terrible blood bath rightly dubbed as the 'Great Calcutta Killing.' Large-scale murders, mob attacks, arson and pillage went on unchecked for the next few days with the connivance of the League Ministry in Bengal.

The Interim Government

The Interim Government headed by Jawaharlal Nehru was sworn in on 2 September, 1946. Shortly afterwards, the Viceroy succeeded in persuading the Muslim League to join the Interim Government. But the League and the Congress members forming the Government could not work as a team. This was only natural because of the wide divergence in their ideas, views and objectives. Smooth running and functioning of the Government was, as bound to be,

seriously affected. The League openly denounced the idea of collective responsibility of the ministry. Outbreak of serious and widespread communal riots, first at Noakhali in East Bengal and then in Bihar, made the situation only more tense and deplorable. Communal riots soon began to spread in different parts of the country like a malignant disease. The brave noble efforts of Gandhiji who went on a peace mission in the affected areas, had of course a sobering effect. But even he could not stop the fratricidal fight altogether.

When the Muslim League members were taken in the Interim Government, it was given to understand that the League would also join the Constituent Assembly. But to the great surprise and dismay of all concerned the League announced that it would not participate in the Constituent Assembly which was due to meet on 9 December, 1946. To find a way out of the baffling situation a meeting of the representatives of the parties concerned was convened in London by the Secretary of State. The outcome of the meeting was, as expected, not an agreement but an announcement by the British Government. It was declared that the British Government would not implement any constitution drafted by a Constituent Assembly unrepresented by a large section of the people, at least so far as the provinces with a Muslim majority were concerned. The announcement elated the Muslim League and Jinnah now found himself in a very favourable position to clinch the issue in favour of a sovereign Pakistan. On the other hand, apprehensions of an impending Partition deepened.

The Constituent Assembly met without the Mus-

The
Constituent
Assembly

lim League members on 9 December, 1946. Dr. Rajendra Prasad was elected as the President. The Constituent Assembly set on its work in right earnest. But the situation continued to be tense. The Congress demanded the resignation of the League members of the Interim Government in view of their boycotting the Constituent Assembly while the League from outside continued to press its demand for Pakistan. The country in the midst of all these uncertainties was passing through a curious stage of suspense, fear and expectation.

Attlee's
announcement of the
decision to
quit India
(20 February, 1947)

On 20 February, 1947, Prime Minister Attlee made the historic announcement that the British would quit India by June, 1948, and necessary steps for the transfer of power to responsible Indian hands must be taken within that period. This was a very bold decision. Attlee believed that unless a date-line was fixed for the transfer of power to Indian hands, there would never be a solution to the problem. He was strongly opposed to the continuance of the British rule in India for any longer period. It is generally believed that the Viceroy Lord Wavell did not agree with the decision of announcing a fixed date-line.

Widespread
communal
riots

Lord Mountbatten succeeded Lord Wavell as Viceroy in March 1941, to take the necessary steps and to make arrangements for the transfer of power. The historic pronouncement caused great excitement and not a little elation in many parts of India. The Muslim League now sought to strengthen its hold on the Muslim majority provinces. It again took recourse to Direct Action to vindicate and popularise its demand for Pakistan. The result was an orgy of communal riots throughout the country. Communal frenzy and

mob violence was at its worst in the Punjab. It resulted in loss of thousands of lives, properties worth millions of rupees and countless of people were rendered homeless destitutes.

The tragic course of events and the grim lessons of the last few months brought the people face to face with the stark reality. Partition had become unavoidable. The Congress, much against its cherished ideal and wishes, had to be reconciled to this solution. But the Congress appeal to the Muslim League for a peaceful transfer of power evoked no favourable response.

Immediately after his assumption of office on 24 March, 1947, Lord Mountbatten started discussions with Indian political leaders. A man with grasp, foresight and understanding, he appreciated the complexity and reality of the situation. So he earnestly sought to work out a practical solution of the problem. He held free and frank discussions with Gandhiji, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and other Congress leaders. He was largely instrumental in making them agree to the sad but inevitable solution of the partition of India. It was also accepted that the provinces of Bengal and Punjab would be partitioned on the basis of majority population in the districts.

After holding some more discussions with the League and the Congress leaders, he finalised his plan and got it approved by the British Cabinet. Lord Mountbatten announced the plan on 3 June, 1947, simultaneously with the British Prime Minister who announced it in the House of Commons. The next day in a Press Conference the Viceroy announced that the transfer of power would be effected probably about

Efforts of
Lord
Mountbatten

The
announcement of
Partition
and transfer of
power
(3 June,
1947)

15 August, 1947. The important points of the procedure for the partition and the transfer of power from British to the Indian hands were as follows :—

1. If the people of the Muslim majority areas so desire, they would be allowed to form a separate Dominion. A new Constituent Assembly would be constituted for that purpose.
2. In case there is partition, there will be a partition of Bengal and the Punjab if the representatives of the non-Moslem majority districts of the two provincial legislative assemblies so desire.
3. The Legislative Assembly of Sind would decide as to whether its constitution should be framed by the existing or a new and separate Constituent Assembly.
4. "In view of its special position" a referendum would be taken in the North-West Frontier Province to ascertain whether it would join Pakistan or remain in India.
5. In case of partition of Bengal there will be a referendum in the district of Sylhet (Assam) to ascertain whether the people would join the new province of East Bengal.
6. In case of partition of the Punjab and Bengal a Boundary Commission will be set up to demarcate the exact boundary line.
7. Legislation would be introduced in the current session of the Parliament "for the transfer of power in 1947 on a Dominion

Status basis to one or two successor authorities according to the decisions taken under the plan. This will be without prejudice to the right of the Constituent Assemblies to decide in due course whether the parts of India which they represent will remain within the British Commonwealth”.

The Congress accepted the plan but not without dissenting voices. The Muslim League, though opposed to the partition of Bengal and the Punjab accepted the plan reluctantly. The Partition was a bitter pill to swallow for many who had so long fought with the ideal of secular nationalism and a united Indian nation. The Hindu Mahasabha also strongly opposed the partition of India. Abdul Ghaffar Khan and other Red Shirt leaders were opposed to the decision concerning the Frontier Province. They wanted that the people of the Province should be given the right to opt for a separate independent State—Pakhtoonistan. This was stoutly opposed by Jinnah and consequently turned down by the British Government. The Red Shirts boycotted the referendum when it took place and the plebiscite went in favour of joining Pakistan.

Plebiscite
in
N.W.F.P.

East Bengal, the West Punjab, Sind, and Baluchistan opted for Pakistan. West Bengal and the East Punjab opted for India. The plebiscite in Sylhet district went in favour of joining Pakistan by a majority vote. In July the Indian Independence Bill was introduced in the British Parliament and was passed without any dissent, receiving Royal assent on 18 July, 1947. August 15, 1947, was fixed as the

Indian
Independ-
ence Act
(July, 1947)

date of the transfer of power. The Indian Independence Act, 1947, provided for the new Independent Dominion of Pakistan with two wings. Pakistan was to comprise Sind, British Baluchistan, N.W.F.P., the West Punjab and East Bengal. The exact boundaries of the last two provinces were to be demarcated by two Boundary Commissions, each consisting of two nominees of the Congress and two of the Muslim League. The Chairman of both the Commissions was Sir Cyrill Radcliffe. In case of disagreement between the members, the Chairman was to give his award. In each of the two independent Dominions of India and Pakistan there was to be a Governor-General, though there was provision for one Governor-General for both the Dominions, if they so desired. (1) The jurisdiction of the British Parliament over British India was to cease from 15 August, 1947.

Lord Mountbatten became the Governor-General of the Dominion of India and M. A. Jinnah, the Governor-General of Pakistan. Most of the princely States, geographically contiguous to India, acceded after prolonged negotiations, to the Indian Dominion by signing the Instrument of Accession and the Standstill Agreement with India before 15 August, 1947. This difficult task of integration of the princely States was accomplished mainly by the efforts of Sardar Patel. The only notable exceptions were the States of Hyderabad and Junagadh.

The Constituent Assembly of Pakistan met on 11 August, and elected Jinnah as its President. The Dominion of Pakistan officially came into being on 15

(1) The Muslim League refused to accept the idea of having one Governor-General for both the Dominions.

August, 1947. A special session of the Constituent Assembly of the Indian Union was held at Delhi on the night of 14 August. The great moment for which the nation had wrought so long had at last come. Jawaharlal Nehru in his memorable address to the Assembly and the nation said, "At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when the age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance. It is fitting that at this solemn moment we take the pledge of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity." Gandhiji, as was his selfless wont, spent the days of glory far away from the capital, in Calcutta, absorbed in the mission of restoring communal harmony. The national movement had at long last achieved its goal. The feeling of the nation was one of ecstasy and great expectations veiled with a sense of parting with the millions of brothers of East Bengal and the West Punjab. But that day of triumph of the national movement will remain written in letters of gold in the history of the Indian people.

15 August,
1947 : Birth
of Free
India

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